Contemporary topics of Islamic Thought

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم

Contemporary Topics of Islamic Thought

:Writer

Muhammad Legenhausen

:Published in print

Alhoda

:Digital Publisher

Ghaemiyeh center of computerized researches

Contents

Contemporary Topics of Islamic Thought

BOOK ID

Author(s): Muhammad Legenhausen

Publisher(s): ALHODA PUBLISHERS

Category: General Philosophy

Topic Tags: Islamic thought Miscellaneous information:nbsp;Contemporary Topics of Islamic Thought

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The Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, Qom

ISBN: ۹۶۴ ۴۷۲ ۲۳۰ ۲

Congress Classification: BP۲۲۹/ل ۸ک ۲ ۱۳۷۹

Dewey Classification: ۲۹۷ /۴۸

National bibliography numbers: م ۷۸-۲۳۱۱۵

سرشناسه : لگنهاوزن، محمد

Legenhausen, Muhammad

عنوان و نام پدیدآور : Contemporary topics of Islamic thought/ Muhammad Legenhausen [for] Center for International and Culturla Studies, Islamic Studies Dept

مشخصات نشر : ۲۰۰۰ = ۱۳۷۹, Tehran: Alhoda.

مشخصات ظاهری : vii، ص ۲۷۸

وضعیت فهرست نویسی : فهرستنویسی قبلی

یادداشت : کتابنامه به صورت زیرنویس

عنوان دیگر : Contemporary topics of Islamic thought

موضوع : اسلام -- تجدید حیات فکری

موضوع : اسلام -- بررسی و شناخت

شناسه افزوده : سازمان فرهنگ و ارتباطات اسلامی. مرکز مطالعات فرهنگی - بین المللی. مدیریت مطالعات اسلامی

رده بندی کنگره : BP۲۲۹/ل ۸ک ۲ ۱۳۷۹

رده بندی دیویی : ۲۹۷ /۴۸

شماره کتابشناسی ملی : م ۷۸-۲۳۱۱۵

point

Heading: Legenhausen, Muhammad

Title and Author: Contemporary topics of Islamic thought/ Muhammad Legenhausen [for] Center for International and Culturla Studies, Islamic Studies Dept

The essays presented by the author here were written in Iran over a period of about ten years (۱۹۸۹-۱۹۹۹). The title of the collection is not meant to suggest that these are the most important topics of contemporary Islamic thought, merely that they are some topics of current discussion among Muslims. These are semi-popular essays written with several purposes in mind.

Alhoda, Publishers Iran -Tehran Tel: ۶۴۰۶۲۶۱, Fax: ۶۴۰۶۲۴۰ Po Box ۱۴۱۵۵-۴۳۶۳

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Preface

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Praise be to Him, to Whom alone belong the East and the West, Whose face is to be

found wherever one turns, and Who guides whom He likes along the straight path. And May His Peace and blessings be with Muhammad, the best of those who have been given wisdom and sound judgment, and with his Ahl al-Bayt, and those who .have been firmly rooted in knowledge, all of them

The essays that follow were written in Iran over a period of about ten years (۱۹۸۹-۱۹۹۹). Most of them have been appeared in journals and magazines, such as The Echo of Islam, Tawhid, Hikmat and The Message of Thaqalayn, all of which are published in .Iran and are intended for an English language Muslim audience

Many

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of the essays have been translated into Farsi and have been published in Farsi .language journals, especially Naqd o Nazar

The title of the collection is not meant to suggest that these are the most important topics of contemporary Islamic thought, merely that they are some topics of current discussion among Muslims. These are semi-popular essays written with several .purposes in mind

First, I wanted to say something about the topics of discussion I have found current among Muslim intellectuals in Iran. The general line I try to take is to avoid extremes. Those who advocate reform sometimes go to the extreme of deviation, and this does .more harm than good to general prospects for reform

Those who would protect tradition, orthodoxy or orthopraxy from deviation sometimes go to the extreme of denying the need for reform, and this does more harm than good to conservative concerns. I think that accepted ideas and practices can always stand reform, but that the advocacy of reform requires the utmost caution .to avoid going astray

We cling to religion for guidance, and religion can only guide us if we are willing to approach it in a spirit of complete submission. We understand religion with the aid of

current ideas and practice, so we cannot advocate too radical a reform program without cutting ourselves off from the means of knowing about what we are .submitting to

Nevertheless, through attention to sources and reliance upon God given reason and insight, one can make out a

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.path for reform

Second, I wanted to show how elements of the Islamic intellectual tradition could be elaborated or drawn upon to address wider issues. Not only the Glorious Qur'an and ahadith, but also the intellectual cultures that have emerged in their shadows, provide a rich supply of ideas and attitudes eternally relevant to the most important problems .that arise for man

Third, I wanted to introduce Muslim intellectuals to books and ideas from Western intellectual culture that I believe would benefit them. If Muslims are to bring effective critical thought to bear against the global domination of certain widespread Western ideas, called the cultural invasion, they must become conversant with the kinds of .criticisms these ideas have spawned in the West

This can be beneficial, for example, in the case of liberalism, not only because Muslims might find common ground with Western critics of liberalism, but because attention to the differences between the Western and Muslim critiques can help to sharpen our .understanding of what is distinctive about views that originate in Islamic cultures

Fourth, as a convert to Islam, I have been attempting to come to grips with how the ideas and values I have acquired from Western culture must be sorted out in the context of my faith in Islam. To a certain extent these essays are indications of how I have sought to respond to Islam and the intellectual traditions it has inspired, given .that I was brought up with and trained in a very different intellectual tradition

Perhaps

the approach I have taken may encourage others in similar circumstances, not only converts to Islam, but young Muslims caught in the swirl of modern cultures. I pray that my errors will be forgiven, and that the rest may be acceptable to Allah. Alhamdu .li-Allah

I would like to thank all those who have helped me, especially Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi and our many friends, colleagues and students at the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, who have made me welcome in Qom and who have encouraged .my studies

I should also express my appreciation for the help and encouragement of Dr. Kamal Kharazi, Dr. Gholamriga Aavani, Muhammad 'Ilmi, 'Ali Quli Qara'i, Sayyid 'Ali Riga .Furighi, Akbar Qanbari, Sa'id Edalat Nezhad, and, of course, the publishers

Qom,Sha'ban ۱۴۲۰ Adhar ۱۳۷۸ December ۱۹۹۹

?Who Can Enter Into The Dialogue Of Civilizations

point

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيم

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

.In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

And you shall speak to men good words

(۲:۸۳)

Introduction

:In the Theatetus, Plato writes

Do not conduct your questioning unfairly. It is very unreasonable that one who professes a concern for virtue should be constantly guilty of unfairness in argument.

Unfairness here consists in not observing the distinction between a debate and a conversation. A debate need not be taken seriously and one may trip up an opponent to the best of one's power, but a conversation should be taken in earnest; one should help out the other party and bring home to him only those slips and fallacies that is due to himself or to his

earlier instructors. If you follow this rule, your associates will lay the blame for their confusions and perplexities on themselves and not on you; they will like you and court your society, and disgusted with themselves, will turn to philosophy, hoping to escape from their former selves and become different men.(۱)

To enter into dialogue, we, too, must be ready to become different men, just as we must be ready to assist those with whom we engage in dialogue to become different men.

If civilizations are to enter into dialogue, it would seem, by analogy, that they should be ready to escape from their former selves and become different civilizations. But is this analogy cogent? I think it is, but I think it is also beneficial to reflect on the metaphor of civilizations in dialogue.

Metaphor Vs Political Analysis

Samuel Huntington(۲) offers a political analysis of the contemporary world as divided into several civilizations with different religions, histories, identities and values. He describes the relations among these cultural groups as the clash of civilizations because the differences in values and other cultural factors give rise to conflict.

He also sees Islamic civilization as the main adversary of the modern liberal West. He suggests that policy makers in the US should make a more concerted effort to consciously defend and promote Western civilization.

Huntington's book has attracted much attention and provoked considerable criticism, as well. His division of the civilizations has been criticized as being somewhat

arbitrary. His analysis has also invited the accusation that he is

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.Plato, Theatetus, ۱۶۷-۱۶۸ -۱

Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World -۲ .(Order (New York: Simon Schuster, ۱۹۹۷

.culturally, if not racially, prejudiced

His view of history has been attacked as inaccurate. Finally, his policy suggestions have been criticized as against US national interests. My concern is not with the details of Huntington's views or whether he or his critics are in the right about any .particular point of issue

One of the most interesting responses to the idea of a 'clash of civilizations' has been articulated by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Sayyid Muhammad Khatemi, who in his address to the ۵۳rd General Assembly of the United Nations, ۲۱ September ۱۹۹۸, reiterated his call for a 'dialogue among civilizations' and proposed .'that the year ۲۰۰۱ be designated as 'the year of dialogue among civilizations

Although the expression 'clash of civilizations' and 'dialogue among civilizations' seems naturally enough opposed, so that the suggestion of President Khatemi appears to be a humane alternative to the clash, the ideas are really so different that .they belong in different categories

The basic idea of the “clash of civilizations” is an explanation for existing conflicts. It is .a piece of political analysis

The idea of a dialogue among civilizations, on the other hand, is not an analysis at all; rather it is a proposal, in the form of a metaphor, for a way in which we might .encounter others

It is as if Machiavelli were answered by Hafiz. One speaks of Realpolitik and the other ,of love ('ishq). If President Khatemi's proposal is to be any more than a lovely thought

.we have to set about trying to understand what is meant by the metaphor

Cashing Out The Metaphor

Civilizations have neither tongues nor ears. They cannot listen and they cannot speak. People speak and listen and engage in conversations; but civilizations are abstract .entities posited by historians and political theorists

Therefore, dialogue among civilizations is impossible. Such is the sort of response a very literally minded person might give to the proposal of a dialogue among .civilizations. Literally speaking, of course, the literalist is right

So, if we are to make any sense out of the idea of a dialogue among civilizations we have to find some way to cash out the metaphor. But there are obstacles to dialogue among civilizations beyond the fact that civilizations lack the appropriate body parts, and these must also be considered as we reflect on how to understand the idea of a .dialogue among civilizations

Other And Self

To speak of dialogue is to speak of a means by which the gap between other and self may be bridged. If the dialogue is to be effective for the sort of transformation of which Plato speaks, it may be a useful reminder to think of bridging the gap from other to self instead of the more common phrase, 'self and other', because dialogue is .not a means to impose ourselves on others, but to welcome them

Dialogue requires invitation, and for Muslims there is more than sufficient instruction in Islam about the proper behavior (adab) involved in offering an invitation and hosting

.guests

In dialogue, however, we are both hosts and guests. The other invites us to partake in the banquet of one's own ideas, values and aspirations, and we invite the stranger to ours. When we listen, we must observe the manners of the guest, and when we .speak, the manners of the host

This is a very delicate business, for if good manners are breached by either .participant, dialogue breaks down

If dialogue as such is difficult between two persons, the difficulties are multiplied when we try to imagine a dialogue among civilizations. To direct attention to another civilization is to consider the many individual persons of that civilization as a mass in which particular nuances are missed and a common set of socially determined values .and attitudes are lumped together

The alien civilization resists our attempts to engage it in dialogue, because it is incapable of respecting the rules of proper behavior. It becomes what Robert Grudin :'calls 'The Mass Other

The Mass Other" becomes an incorporated giant, firm in its tastes and unified in its" intentions. To this extent, "The Mass Other" has identity without soul, dominion .without compassion

It has dominion because it is a consolidation of social power; it has no sympathy for others because it has no awareness of itself. It is a monster, a cold smug staring face, .the brazen image of a self protective system

This image speaks but does not listen. Our relationship to it is completely no dialogic, because its power lies in the

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denial of dialogue. It harangues us with official discourse but shrinks and vanishes at (the threat of response.(١

.In order for dialogue to take place, we will need to find another other

In a metaphorical sense, all of the products of a civilization may be considered its speech. Civilizations speak through their arts and technologies, through their .literature and law, and through the histories of their ideas

Even if civilizations have no minds with which to think, the thoughts arising among the people of a civilization and reflected in their labor and its products may be attributed .to the civilization itself

So, there is a sense, after all, in which civilizations do have tongues, for as the tongue of a man shows what he thinks, so too, the products of a civilization reflect its .thoughts

If there is to be dialogue among civilizations, however, it is not enough for them to speak. They must also listen. One person shows that he has listened to another when .the speech of the other elicits a reaction, in deeds or in words

If civilizations speak through their products, they may be said to listen to another civilization when the products of the other elicit a reaction, in historical events or in its own products. How can the products of one civilization elicit a reaction in another? .Certainly, this is a constant occurrence

Art critics point out how the arts and architecture of one culture often influence those of another. Often it takes ages before the

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Robert Grudin, On Dialogue (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, ۱۹۹۶), ۱۲۳-۱۲۴ -۱

products of a culture may be seen to influence those of another, as the styles of an .ancient civilization become fashionable in a modern one

There are also cases of fairly rapid exchange, as Japanese technology imitated that of the West, and was soon itself emulated in European and American factories.

Through imitation and modification, through montage and even outright purchase, .people, cultures, nations and civilizations show that they are listening to one another

If the products of a civilization are its speech, and its listening is the reflection in those products of the products of others, it would seem that the two essential elements for dialogue, speaking and listening, are present in the metaphorical sense sketched, in .civilizations

Here, we are using anthropological analogies to speak of dialogue among civilizations. Let's call this interpretation of dialogue among civilizations the anthropological .analogy interpretation

The elements we have identified in the anthropological analogy interpretation are not sufficient for dialogue among civilizations, for true dialogue requires more than mere speaking and listening. Even if civilizations can be brought by metaphor to talk with .one another, they cannot be disabused of their lack of manners

Dialogue requires observation of manners indicating a readiness to enter the world of the alien and genuinely welcoming intentions. Civilizations may produce and imitate, .export and import, but they do not open their hearts in dialogue

The Representatives Of Civilizations

Even if the metaphor discussed above is judged inadequate for understanding the idea of a dialogue among civilizations, this is no reason to

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give up on the idea altogether. Perhaps what is needed is a change in the figure of .speech

Rhetoricians use the term synecdoche for the trope in which a part or individual represents the whole or type, as well as the reverse. So, we might say that a dialogue among civilizations takes place when individuals belonging to different civilizations .engage in dialogue

Of course, more than this is needed if we are to achieve what is meant by a dialogue of civilizations. Not every dialogue among members of different civilizations will count as a dialogue among civilizations. If a surgeon from China discusses surgical technique with a surgeon from Tunis, the dialogue may take place entirely within the .framework of Western medicine

In order for a dialogue among individuals to count as a dialogue among civilizations, the individuals must be taken to represent different civilizations. We could say that there was a dialogue among nations when the representatives of those nations discuss a topic, for example, in the meetings of the Islamic Conference Organization. We could say that there was a dialogue among religions when the leaders of various .religious sects convened, e.g., the Pope and the Dalai Lama

So, we can say that abstract social entities may engage in dialogue with one another .when they have recognized leaders who represent them

We might call the interpretation of dialogue among civilizations as dialogue among the representatives of civilizations the representational model of dialogue among civilizations. The main problem with this interpretation is that

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.civilizations are not organizations with official representatives and leaders

Who could be said to represent Western civilization? Is it the president of the European Union? Who represents Chinese civilization? Certainly, not the current head of the Communist Party there. Even if there were free and fair elections held in the lands in which the various civilizations advance and decline, it is doubtful whether true .representatives of those civilizations would be elected

The people who would be elected most likely would be political leaders, but to represent a civilization it is not enough to be a shrewd politician or very popular .among the people of that civilization

A civilization is not a political district. There is a difference between the Chinese nation

and Chinese civilization. In its primary meaning, a civilization is not a community or .collection of individuals, but rather it is a highly advanced state of human society

It seems, however, that the sense in which Prof. Huntington and President Khatemi use the term is that according to which a civilization is considered to consist of those .people who have achieved such an advanced state of human society

Nevertheless, to represent the people as members of a civilization is not the same as representing them politically, for to represent a civilization, one must be able to represent the ideas, artistic tastes, spiritual values, cultural attitudes, technology and .literature of that civilization

One must be a historian of one's civilization to represent it, but being a historian is not enough. One

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should also be an anthropologist, sociologist, philosopher, linguist, political scientist, architect, literary critic, film critic, and much more. It is obvious that it is therefore .impossible for any one person to represent a civilization

Perhaps the representational model of dialogue among civilizations can still be salvaged in order to understand very limited forms of dialogue, dialogue among aspects of civilizations, but for anyone to imagine himself as the representative of a .civilization would seem to require hubris of tremendous enormity, and perhaps worse

The very idea that a person could represent a civilization would seem to require identification with one's civilization that would seem to require something bordering .on a type of hysteria usually associated with tribal loyalties

To the long list of politically incorrect attitudes including racism, nationalism and sexism, one might as well add civilizationism. A civilizationist’s attitude is incompatible .with the self-transformative aims of dialogue

When one imagines oneself as the representation of a civilization in dialogue with the

representatives of other civilizations, one will be on the defense. Once one stops, defending one's civilization, doubts arise as to whether one is really representing one's civilization. There can be no meaningful dialogue when the participants are busy .taking up defensive postures

At the same time that those who imagine themselves to be the representatives of their civilizations confront one another, they imagine the other to fit into the stereotype of “The Mass Other”, described by Grudin above. It is possible that some sort of polemic will ensue, but under

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.these circumstances there can be no real dialogue

The Person As Product

The solution to the problem of how to understand dialogue among civilizations I would like to suggest draws upon elements of both the anthropological analogy model and .the representational model

The main problem with the anthropological analogy model was that civilizations are not intentional beings capable of engaging in real dialogue. Recognition of this flaw .motivated the idea of finding real human beings to represent civilizations

The two main problems of the representational model, however, are (۱) particular individuals are not capable of representing the vastly various aspects of civilizations, and (۲) to imagine oneself the representative of a civilization seems to require an .arrogance inconsistent with dialogue

One solution to the problem would be to allow that civilizations may enter into dialogue with one another through the dialogues among individuals of different civilizations, but not where these individuals fancy themselves to be the representatives of their civilizations, rather, their dialogues may be seen as expressing the dialogue of civilizations, just as war among the nations of different .civilizations may be said to express the clash of civilizations

As in the representational metaphor, we may speak of individuals as representing their civilizations, not in the sense that any individual has the right or ability to speak for a civilization, but in the sense that a civilization may speak through the words of .individuals because each person is a product of his civilization

Persons may become vehicles for the dialogue among civilizations because

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persons are products of their civilizations. As in the anthropomorphic analogy, we may imagine civilizations to speak through their products, but for dialogue to take place it is only the person as product who can become the instrument of dialogue among .civilizations

Dialogue, History And Identity

When we think of dialogue among civilizations in the manner suggested above, two important complications must be kept in mind. First, in the modern world, people are .not the products of a single civilization, nor is it desirable that they should be

Second, the dialogue among civilizations that takes place through dialogues among persons of different civilizations is not only made up of dialogues among many different thinkers discussing a wide variety of topics, it is also a dialogue that is .extended in time over generations

It is a piecemeal process of relatively limited conversations that take the shape of a .dialogue among civilizations only when seen from a distance

:Consider the second point first. Alasdair MacIntyre writes

Conversations are extended in time. At later points someone may always refer back to some earlier point with a variety of purposes: to evaluate what has only emerged cumulatively, to examine the consistency or inconsistency of what has been said, to put an old point in a new light or vice versa. Crucial to polemical conversations therefore is how the different and disagreeing participants understand the identity

and continuity of those with whom they speak, of how each stands in relation to his or her past and future utterances in what

he or she says or writes now. Underlying the conflicts of polemical conversations are the rival participants' presuppositions about continuing personal identity through (time. (۱

MacIntyre continues with a discussion of personal identity in Aristotelian/Augustinian .traditions

First, part of being a single person throughout one's physical life is having one and the same body. Second, part of my identity derives from my accountability before the communities of which I am a member for my actions, attitudes, statements and .beliefs

An important psychological factor in understanding oneself to be a Muslim, for example, is due to the fact that one's actions, attitudes, statements and beliefs are considered by one to be liable to questioning by other Muslims. For the Muslim, of course, (as well as for the Augustinian) much more important is answerability before God, but this lesser form of liability among community members plays an important .role in religious as well as non-religious communities

The third point MacIntyre makes is also not foreign to Islamic thought: life is seen as a quest whose object is the discovery of the truth, including the truth about one's life as a whole. This quest is also considered an indispensable element in a good life. MacIntyre admits that this conception of personal identity is not unique to Thomism, .but is a common understanding in traditional societies

To belong to a civilization is to see one's own personal identity as a part of the identity of one's civilization. The civilization has a physical existence

Alasdair MacIntyre, Three Rival versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy -١ .and Tradition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, ١٩٩٠), ١٩۶

.in the temporally overlapping corporeal lives of its members

The civilization is bound together by common themes found in the understanding of its members about how they are to justify their actions, attitudes, statements and beliefs to one another. Thirdly, the life of a civilization may also be seen as a quest or journey (sayr) through history in which the individual quests of its members are .crucial

:With regard to the quest to discover the truth, MacIntyre asks

Through what form of social engagement and learning can the errors which may obstruct such discovery be brought to light? The first and basic answers to these questions are those proposed by Socrates. It is only insofar as someone satisfies the conditions for rendering him or herself vulnerable to dialectical refutation that that person can come to know whether and what he or she knows. It is only by belonging to a community systematically engaged in a dialectical enterprise in which the standards are sovereign over the contending parties that one can begin to learn the truth, by first learning the truth about one's own error, not error from this or that point of view but error as such, the shadow cast by truth as such: contradiction in respect of (utterance about the virtues.(١

Much of this may be repeated with regard to dialogue among civilizations. The quest for truth and self-transcendence found in Plato's discussion of dialogue suggests that a person, as a bearer of a civilization, must engage in the

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.MacIntyre (١٩٩٠), ٢٠٠ -١

dialogue among civilizations in order to discover the truth about himself as a member of that civilization with which he identifies. It is through participation in dialogue that

.one's errors may come to light

To engage in dialogue one becomes accountable to the other. This reaches a rather extreme form in dialogue among civilizations, for one becomes accountable to another who is seen as representing attitudes, values and traditions strange and alien .from one's own

To be accountable in a dialogue of civilizations is to be open to having to give an account of what one has either said or done, or of the ideas and practices of the civilization with which one identifies, and then to be open to having to amplify, explain, defend, and if necessary, either modify or abandon that account, and in this latter case to begin the work of supplying a new one in terms the alien can understand, or (be taught to understand.(۱

As dialogue unfolds, its participants must be ready to abandon the account of some particular topic they had associated with the civilization they represent, and accept .the superiority of the account given by representatives of another civilization

When the dialogue continues, the participants will no longer be pure representatives of their own civilizations. In fact, the idea that there are any representatives of a single civilization, a single unspoiled tradition, ought to be recognized as a potentially dangerous myth in the modern world because it hinders genuine dialogue, promotes giving excuses for the

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.MacIntyre (۱۹۹۰), ۲۰۱ -۱

deficiencies in our own traditions, and blinds one to the vision of other civilizations as .potential sources for the enrichment of one's own civilization

This is especially important for Muslims. Islam came to place dedication to the Truth (haqq) above tribal loyalties. We are not to continue in established ways simply .because we found our fathers doing so

Like Christian tradition, Muslim traditions are never pure; they always arise from an attempt to reform given cultures through the teachings of God's appointed .(Messenger (SAW

Similar points are made by the Christian theologian Miroslav volf about Christianity.(۱) While MacIntyre emphasizes the importance of tradition, Volf observes that Christianity does not call mankind to any particular civilization or tradition, but to a .series of interrelated basic commitments-beliefs and practices

These commitments can be developed into traditions, cultures and perhaps even civilizations, as they interact with and reform the societies in which these commitments are made. However, at every step of the way, we can ask whether what has been wrought cannot be brought into better accord with the faith. Much the .same could be said with regard to Islam

Our understanding of the dynamics of dialogue among civilizations will be enhanced through reflection on the differences expressed by Volf and MacIntyre. MacIntyre holds that a coherent moral stand, as well as coherent standards of reason, can only .be achieved within a tradition

There is no neutral ground from which we can issue judgments about moral worth or rational acceptability. MacIntyre expresses grave doubts

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See Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, -۱ .Otherness, and Reconciliation (Nashville: Abingdon, ۱۹۹۶), ۲۰۸

about the direction of modern society which seems to have cut itself off from the .traditions which have the most to offer it

MacIntyre's discussions of the importance of tradition are relevant to our considerations of dialogue among civilizations because civilization itself is a social .embodiment of one or more traditions

Dialogue among civilizations is only possible when those who participate in the dialogue understand their own identities and those of their civilizations in relation to the traditions from which they emerge in history.

The emphasis MacIntyre places on tradition leads to an assumption that conversation with others will be polemical. We engage in conversation in order to test our own views against those of others. The rivals whom MacIntyre would speak are not alien civilizations, but the modernists and postmodernists of Western civilization.

The complaint raised against MacIntyre by Volf is that the glorification of tradition is both unrealistic and harmful. It is unrealistic because our cultures and traditions "are not integrated wholes and cannot be made to be such in contemporary societies... precisely, because we cannot avoid living in overlapping and rapidly changing social spaces.

In contemporary societies it is impossible to pursue a coherent system of goods. Instead, we must rest satisfied with holding onto basic commitments."(١) The ideal of the single coherent tradition is harmful, according to Volf, because it would seem to require "an anti-modern and anti-pluralistic social revolution." Volf comments that such a revolution would most certainly not 'pay off.'

MacIntyre, however, agrees with Volf that

١- Volf (١٩٩۶), ٢٠٩-٢١٠.

traditions are hybrid, and he has explicitly renounced the communitarian politics against which Volf warns. Volf thinks that MacIntyre must want to eliminate the impurity, the hybridity, of traditions in order to make them into the sort of coherent systems from which moral and rational evaluations can be issued.

Against MacIntyre, however, I have argued that a Christian theologian will not necessarily want to get rid of the "hybridity"- she will be much more interested in

affirming basic Christian commitments in culturally situated ways than in forging coherent traditions and we will suspect that hybrid traditions will be more open than coherent traditions not only to be shaped by these commitments but also to be (enriched by each other.(۱

MacIntyre would no doubt respond that he has no aspiration to the elimination of hybridity from traditions. Indeed, the tradition of which he is most fond, the Thomistic, is admittedly a hybrid of Christian and Aristotelian thought, with strong influences .traceable to Muslim thought

Moreover, we should expect that MacIntyre would argue that the 'basic commitments' Volf finds at the essence of Christianity will mean different things to different people depending upon the traditions of thought upon which they draw to .interpret them

This debate enhances our understanding of the dynamics of the dialogue among civilizations because of the importance of hybridity and tradition. We cannot understand ourselves or our civilizations without understanding the traditions that .inform them

If we are to hope to understand other persons or civilizations, we must inquire into

p: ۲۱

.Volf (۱۹۹۶), ۲۱۱, also see ۵۲ -۱

the traditions of the other, as well. This is what we learn from MacIntyre. What Volf rightly emphasizes, however, is that in order to understand ourselves, our civilizations, our traditions, other persons, other civilizations and other traditions, we have to recognize that none of them are pure, in the sense that none of them .represents a single line of thought

All are syntheses of various streams of thought and culture. Yet, it is not mere chaos. There are main streams and there are secondary influences. Within the mix it is still

possible to distinguish characteristic features of cultures, civilizations and traditions. Our hybrid thoughts and practices express themselves in ways more or less typical of .a tradition or culture or civilization, with strands woven in from other sources

As we step back and look at our conversations we may be able to recognize patterns in which participants from different civilizations utilize the difference in perspective to .which they are exposed to transcend themselves in true dialogue

The role of Islam in the dialogue among civilizations is rather complicated. Perhaps more than the sources of any other religion, the sources of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah, address themselves to others. Usually the other is addressed in the form of an invitation to Islam, and for various reasons, this may seem threatening to the .outsider

Nevertheless, in its essence the invitation can be read as the initiation of dialogue. The Muslim ummah calls on others to join it, and it thereby opens

itself to the transformation of self brought on by the inclusion of other peoples, other ways of thinking and living. The ummah has undergone major historical .transformations as a result of its incorporation of non-Arab peoples

At the same time, the invitation beckons the other to a self transformation as well. Even if the other ultimately refuses to accept Islam, the invitation sets up the fundamental grounds for dialogue. But Islam itself is not a civilization. Although Islam is a religion, there is the question of Islamic civilization. There is a nice discussion of :this question in the introduction to Marshall Hodgson's The venture of Islam

I plead that it has been all too common, in modern scholarship, to use the terms 'Islam' and 'Islamic' too casually both for what we may call religion and for the overall .society and culture associated historically with the religion

I grant that it is not possible nor, perhaps, even desirable to draw too sharp a line here, for (and not only in Islam) to separate out religion from the rest of life is partly to

falsify it. Nevertheless, the society and culture called 'Islamic' in the second sense are not necessarily 'Islamic' in the first. Not only have the groups of people involved in the two cases not always been co-extensive (the culture has not been simply a 'Muslim culture', a culture of Muslims)-much of what even Muslims have done as a part of the "Islamic' civilization can only be characterized as 'un-Islamic

.in the first, religious sense of the word

One can speak of 'Islamic literature', of 'Islamic art', of 'Islamic philosophy', even of 'Islamic despotism', but in such a sequence one is speaking less and less of something (that expresses Islam as a faith.(١

The solution suggested by Hodgson is that the term 'Islamic' be used for that which pertains to the religion, and that 'Islamicate' be used to describe the society and culture in which the Muslims and Islam are recognized as prevalent or socially .dominant in some sense

To describe something as Islamicate is not to indicate the geographical area of its origin, but to that which emerges from the complex of social relations in which Islam was or is prevalent, particularly the lettered traditions grounded in Arabic and Persian historically distinctive of societies of Muslim peoples, societies which included, of .course, non-Muslims

Thus, Maimonides may be called an Islamicate philosopher and a Jewish philosopher, .but not an Islamic philosopher

The remarks in the previous sections about the dialogue among civilizations were made under the assumption that among the civilizations for which dialogue has been prescribed, are those of the West and of Islam. When we speak of dialogue with the civilization of Islam, we are not speaking of the ideal society prescribed by the religion .of Islam for man, but of what has actually evolved among Muslim peoples

So, it would be better to speak of Islamicate civilization, in Hodgson's terminology,

than of Islamic civilization. It is through dialogue

p: ۲۴

Marshall G. S. Hodgson, The venture of Islam, vol. ۱, (Chicago: University of Chicago -۱ Press, ۱۹۷۴), ۵۷.

among civilizations that Muslims may hope to transform contemporary Islamicate civilization into something more of an Islamic civilization, insha'Allah!

In closing, consider the observation of Hodgson:

Muslims are assured in the Qur'an, 'You have become the best community ever raised up for mankind, enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong, and having faith in God' (III, ۱۱۰).Earnest men have taken this prophecy seriously to the point of trying to mould the history of the whole world in accordance with it.. Muslims have yet to implement the Qur'anic prophecy fully in all its implications. But they have perennially renewed their hopes and efforts to live the godly life not only as individuals but as a community. In every age, pious Muslims have reasserted their faith, in the light of new circumstances that have arisen out of the failures and also the successes of the past. The vision has never vanished, the venture has never been abandoned; these hopes and efforts are still vitally alive in the modern world. The history of Islam as a faith, and of the culture of which it has formed the core, derives its unity and its unique significance from that vision and that venture.(۱)

Contemporary Problems Of Christian Theology In Islamic Thought

Theology begins with the question of God. This is true for all the major theistic theological traditions: Jewish, Christian and Muslim. Typically, the theologian assumes that his readers believe in the faith he intends to systematize, defend, and elaborate. He assumes that they know who God is, and believe in

p: ۲۵

۱- Hodgson (۱۹۷۴), ۷۱.

.Him. His task is to rationalize this faith, first be demonstrating God's existence

In modern Christian theology, however, one finds much hesitation and doubt about whether this first theological task is at all appropriate. The particular arguments presented by Maimonides, Aquinas and Ibn Sina have come under philosophical attack, and more fundamentally, the methods of demonstration employed by them .have been attacked

Since the Reformation, there has been much doubt about the relevance of Greek logic .and metaphysics to the project of elaborating the Christian faith

Similar doubts have become widespread in the Muslim world. Even among the Shi'ah, who continued to nurture a philosophical or theosophical tradition, there are many .who consider this tradition of thought inappropriate as a ground of doctrine

This sort of opposition to philosophy has a long history among the Shi'ah, and has been mounted by some 'urafa, muhadithin, akhbariyyun, and most recently by the maktab-e tafkik.(۱) Muslim detractors of philosophy, however, have not offered very much as an alternative to the philosophical groundwork for faith, but have tended to .assume an innate acceptance of its basic elements

The criticism of philosophy among Muslim thinkers is further complicated by two factors. First, what is generally criticized is the specific philosophical tradition in Islamic thought stemming from the works of Ibn Sina, Sohravardi and Sadr al-.Muta'alihin

This leaves open the possibility of a philosophical systematization of the faith along other lines. So, the second complication is the readiness of many critics of philosophy to elaborate philosophical theologies of

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۱- This school of thought is current among a group of Shi'i scholars who argue for the .separation (tafqlq) of theology from philosophy

.their own

The classic example of this movement is Ghazali's repudiation of philosophy and his own philosophical elaboration of his creed, replete with proofs for the existence of .God, for His uniqueness, and for various divine attributes

Likewise, sufis in the tradition of Ibn 'Arabi have entered into a philosophical dialogue with peripatetic philosophy in which they have offered their own system of thought as a rational alternative to that of the philosophers, while retaining the methods of demonstration and many of the concepts employed by their opponents. Two brilliant examples of this trend are 'Abd al-Rahman Jami's Al-Durrah al-Fakhirah and the .correspondence between Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi and Sadr al-Din Qinawi

However, because of the ongoing and ever increasing confrontation with Western thought and culture, doubts are raised about the entire enterprise of rational .systematic theology

These doubts have a specific significance in the Western world due to the historical movement from the Reformation, through the Enlightenment, to modern and post-modern thought. In the world of Islam, on the other hand, the significance of such doubts is radically altered by the fact that they are a foreign import in many ways at .odds with the entire tradition of Islamic theology

It is true that some Muslims have demanded reliance on the Qur'an and ahadith without the interference of rational demonstration in ways strikingly similar to the demands of Christian reformers, but the evolution of the rejection of philosophical theology in Christian thought has led to a style of Christian theology that

has no counterpart in Islam; and additionally, the philosophical grounds for rejecting any form of rational theology in the West are to be found in schools of thought as diverse as existentialism and scientific realism, all of which enter discussions among .Muslims as aliens

Philosophical reflection, at least in a broad sense not limited to any specific school, has seemed to most Muslim theologians to be encouraged by the Qur'an and ahadith, especially as interpreted by the Shi'ah.

The Qur'an is replete with exhortations to reflect upon its signs (ayat), such as

“Behold! How repeatedly we display the signs that they may understand…” (۶:۶۵),

And remonstrations against those who fail to reason, such as

“Indeed, We have created for hell many of the jinn and the men; they have hearts with which they do not understand…” (۷:۱۷۹).

Because of the abundance of such verses,(۱) it becomes impossible to justify a thorough anti-intellectualism on religious grounds in the context of Islamic culture. Muslim thinkers have not only taken encouragement from Islam to engage in intellectual pursuits, they have understood such ayat as those mentioned above as a divine invitation to employ philosophical reflection for the purpose of understanding the Qur'an and ahadith.

Wisdom is prized by Muslims because the Qur'an itself proclaims,

“He grants wisdom to whomever He wills, and he who has been granted wisdom has been given abundant good; and none shall mind it save those endowed with wisdom…” (۲:۲۶۹).

Muslims may differ over how the term Hikmah is to be interpreted

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۱ – For a small sampling, see (۲:۲۱۹), (۲:۲۴۲), (۲:۲۶۶), (۳:۱۹۱), (۶:۹۸), (۷:۱۷۶), (۷:۱۷۹), (۹:۸۱), (۹:۱۲۲), (۱۰:۲۴), (۱۲:۲), (۱۳:۳), (۱۶:۱۱), (۳۰:۸), (۳۹:۴۲), (۵۹:۲۱).

in this ayah, and even if most will agree that it does not refer to the specific tradition of philosophical thought that has emerged through the centuries in Islamic thought, few will deny that intellectual reflection is accorded great religious value in Islam.

Likewise, there is a veritable ocean of narrations attributed to the Prophet (SAW) and Imams (A) extolling the intellectual virtues of wisdom, knowledge and reason. For example, it is reported that the Prophet (SAW) said, "The virtue of knowledge is more beloved to Allah than the virtue of worship."(۱)

As with the Qur'an, the narrations both encourage the use of the intellect and pose problems for philosophical reflection. Muslim sages have made use of philosophical terms for the rational investigation of religion, and they have used terms drawn from the religious sources to articulate their philosophical reflections.(۲) They have been inspired by the Qur'an and ahadith to develop various philosophical ideas, and they have used philosophical ideas drawn from a variety of sources as aids to the understanding of scripture.

In the context of this sacred value placed on knowledge and the intellect, there remains plenty of room for discussion about what kinds of knowledge and wisdom are to be valued, what the intellect is and what are its functions.

Muslim critics of philosophy may argue that philosophy has been used inappropriately to interpret scripture, or that it is sorely limited and must be supplemented by imagination to provide any understanding of religious topics, or that its demonstrations

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱, p. ۱۶۷.

۲- See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Qur'an and ahadith as source and inspiration of Islamic philosophy," in History of Islamic Philosophy (۲ vols.), Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, eds., (London: Routledge, ۱۹۹۶), ۲۷-۳۹.

serve only as allusions to the divine. These sorts of points arise from within Islamic culture where they have been and continue to be debated.

The Western critiques of natural theology have an entirely different flavor. Islamic culture has not produced a concept of iman like that of Christian faith as the latter is

.taken to stand independent of and beyond reason and knowledge

Islamic culture has not produced any sort of theological antirealism of the sort debated in Western circles. Islamic thought has not given rise to the atheism and agnosticism that have emerged from Christian culture and whose religious .significance continues to be discussed by Christian theologians and philosophers

For these and many other reasons, Western theological concerns arrive on the shores of the world of Islam as an invasion. The Muslim response often seems as .pointless as that of a person who argues with the newscasters on television

Despite all the talk about interfaith dialogue, the dynamics of the ways in which the world of Islam confronts the West force Muslim intellectuals to consider Western ideas very seriously, even if the engagement is accompanied by anxiety and apprehension, while Western thinkers are generally quite content to ignore what .goes on in the intellectual third world

Islamic theological reflection is shunted off as a specialty item for connoisseurs of esoterica. Dialogue is thus stifled, not because of ill will per se, but because there is no demand and no pressing need for Westerners to listen to Muslims, while Muslims

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cannot avoid listening to the Western discussions with which the entire world seems .to reverberate

One reaction this situation has provoked among some Muslims is a retreat into tradition. The glories of the past are recounted and redoubled with a firm intention to abandon the satanic modern world in favor of a puritanical return to the pristine Islam .of days gone by

This reaction is resisted by Muslims who would prove that Islam is perfectly well suited to serve as an ideology for the development of modern societies. There can be no escape from the repetitive counterpoint of these attitudes in social-religious thinking at least until the impact of Western thought in the Islamic world is sufficiently

understood, accepted for what it is, and met by constructive critique and synthesis in .harmony with the evolution of contemporary Islamic theology

The heart and soul of the Muslim world is thoroughly imbued with religion. If Muslims are not to lose heart and lose their souls, the task of rational reflection on religion must be taken up again with full awareness of all the currents of thought that wash .across the contemporary world of Islam

The West must be understood not only as cultural invader, but as itself tormented by the twists of modern and postmodern thought that have led it to the verge of nihilism in more than one guise. In order for Muslims to orient themselves in the contemporary world, religion must be seen not as something to be merely defended, but as

.offering a way forward with valuable guidance for all of humanity

We cannot ourselves be saved unless we can invite the entire world to salvation, and before we can offer anything inviting, we need to understand the differences in our .cultural and intellectual climates as well as the common problems they face

The invitation to salvation extended by Muslims need not take the form of offering a choice between death and Islam; what I mean by this is that we should not take the attitude that for the Muslim invitation to salvation to be successful it must result in formal conversion to the religion of Islam as ordained by Allah, subhana wa ta'ala, .(through His final Prophet (SAW

The Qur'an itself tells us to address the People of the Book in an effort to come to a common word upon which we can agree.(١) The common word to which we invite the People of the Book must itself be understood as a means of salvation, at least in the .sense that it offers a way out of the wretchedness faced by those who would deny it

In order for us to be saved, we must be able to understand from what it is we wish to be saved, and how religion may save us from it. From an eschatological point of view,

salvation means escape from the fire of hell, but the power of this image should not cause us to neglect the worldly failings which culminate in hell and

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۱- (۳:۶۳).

.are presaged in the ugliness and cruelty the world too often manifests

Despite all its secularism, the Western world is the inheritor of Christendom. Its values are rooted in references to divinity. The United States, for example, was built on foundations laid by those who had attempted to convene theocracies in the new .colonies

So, the loss of certainty about God, let alone the idea of the death of God, threatens to undermine the humanity of Western man, unless some foundation for human values can be found to replace the theological structures many would be happy to see left in .ruins

This is reason enough for some Christians to seek to preserve their faith in God. But while it may provide sufficient motivation for the attempt, it cannot by itself provide .answers to the intellectual doubts that pervade contemporary Western culture

In addition to the doubts about God raised by philosophers primarily in criticisms of the proofs for His existence, the doubts raised by social critics have had a greater .influence on the secularization of Western culture

While Voltaire (۱۶۹۴-۱۷۷۸) accepted that the concept of God was needed to maintain social order in his remark that if God did not exist it would be necessary to create Him, the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (۱۸۱۴-۱۸۷۶) exclaimed that if God did exist it would be necessary to destroy Him, because so much oppression had been carried .out in His Name

,If Voltaire's remark suggests that God may be little more than a convenient fiction

Bakunin suggests that the fiction may be quite inconvenient. The Marxist critique of religion has also been accepted by many who are skeptical of other aspects of Marxist .doctrine

Today some feminists object to the concept of God as a prop for patriarchy, and homosexuals complain that prejudice against them is maintained by reference to God. In general, such thinkers quite correctly realize that an orientation toward God serves as a constraint on the satisfaction of various human desires, and is .incompatible with what many consider to be of utmost value

Western thought is caught between two competing claims to moral allegiance. On the one hand, there is the transcendent God Who demands absolute obedience as the ultimate authority. On the other hand, there is a secular ethos based on the values of .human freedom and self-determination

Western religious liberals attempt an awkward compromise that would coerce the divine will to conform to humanistic values. Moral direction is derived from the human, and then the transcendent God is called in and would be forced into complicity. He is allowed to stand above the world, but not to interfere with human judgments about .what is right and wrong. Deist theology is at least honest about this

In Muslim culture, on the other hand, reference to God does not occur in the context of the doubts and secular values that plague the West, or at least not to the same extent. The major form in which secular values come into conflict with Islam is

.in the form of nationalism

Muslim intellectuals often see themselves as Arabs or Iranians or Indonesians or whatever, and only then as Muslims. Sometimes Islam is only accepted as an expression of national culture. They seek direction in life in terms of the historical development of their people or nation, and relegate religion to the private sphere of

personal spirituality and ceremonies, on the model of what they perceive to be the .role of religion in technologically advanced societies

The conflict is between religious and secular ideology, which usually is discussed in terms of the scope of religion, but there is little of the direct confrontation with God .common in the West. There is no death of God theology among Muslims

Muslim modernists may advance harsh criticisms of Islam as it has been understood within their traditions, but they are not willing to extend the criticism to God Himself. Western angst about God has not taken root in the world of Islam, alhamdu-lil-Allah, and questions about how to justify belief in God, which have figured so prominently in recent Western philosophy of religion, appear curiously irrelevant to the primary .theological concerns of Muslims

Nevertheless, Muslim theology must begin to consider seriously the problems of Western philosophy of religion if Islam is to be presented as a way of salvation for all .people, including those of the West

We can no longer rest content with the traditional proofs because the standards of .reason to which they appeal are no longer universally accepted

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This does not mean that traditional Islamic theology and philosophy can or should be simply swept aside; rather the issues of theology require a more fundamentally .critical treatment than they are usually given

We need to begin by considering how the basic concepts of theology, concepts of God, man and the world, are treated in Islam and in Christian culture, and how rational reflection on these concepts and their different treatments in the Islamic and .Christian traditions can help us to clear a path to theological understanding

This means that our standards of rationality themselves must be subject to critical review and evaluation. The roots of the most profound doubts about religious reason lie in the success of the empirical sciences and technology as they have developed in

.the West

When it is observed that the standards of reasoning employed in the sciences differ markedly from those used by theologians, it is natural to wonder if the former cannot .suffice for all human purposes

The vindication of theological reasoning requires an explanation of how the progress of the natural sciences can be justified in its own terms. Theology can no longer afford to ignore the philosophy of science. Religion declares that God is the creator of the natural world. So, the methods that have been successfully used to unlock the secrets of the natural world must be understood as revealing the workings of His creation, at .least on some level

What is needed, as Seyyed Hossein Nasr puts it, is a

p: ۳۶

sacred science.(۱) Until a way is found to elaborate an understanding of the natural sciences as sacred, as governed by standards of reasoning which are a branch of the more encompassing methods of rational reflection that apply to theology and philosophy as well as to mathematics, physics, medicine and cognitive science, theology will remain susceptible to the charge that its concerns are peripheral, or may .be safely dismissed

Furthermore, since theology must draw upon the imagination as well as reason, it must show how its imaginative work can enlighten and deepen the dry findings of .empirical research and applied mathematics

The elaboration of the sciences as sacred does not require an uncritical acceptance of all that has been accomplished by secular science; to the contrary, it is through critical .appraisal that the call for sacred science is to be vindicated

The program, however, must aim at integration rather than isolation and protection, for the strategy of isolating and protecting religion from critical confrontation with other areas of human knowledge has been largely responsible for the marginalization

.of religion in Western societies

Traditional formulations of theology, whether Jewish, Christian, Muslim or Hindu, have not limited themselves to discussions of divinity; they have included cosmology as well. The theological affirmation of sacred cosmology must be regained in the encounter with modern science for theology to remain sound, for classical theological cosmologies have always freely made use of the current sciences of their times .without entering into the details of astronomical data

Often, more than the

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۱ - Seyyed Hossein Nasr, The Need for a Sacred Science (Albany: State University of .(New York Press, ۱۹۹۳

basic outlines of religious cosmologies formulated under the assumption of a geocentric universe can be revised to accord with post-Copernican theories, because religious cosmologies are mostly concerned with the world as the creation and sign of .God, regardless of its physical shape

Nevertheless, the physical shape of the cosmos assumed in the past was taken to have a symbolic value in harmony with the religious point of view, and this has not yet .been recovered

The legacy of theology is no less one of anthropology than cosmology. If the modern natural sciences have posed a challenge to theology's concern with cosmology, the modern human sciences threaten its anthropology. Indeed, anti-religious sentiments are much more prevalent among psychologists and sociologists than among physical (scientists.(۱

Islam portrays man as a theomorphic being who due to negligence has fallen astray from his divine aim, and who has accepted a covenant with God by means of which he may obtain divine guidance to his own felicity through the reminders sent by God with

His prophets (may the peace and benedictions of Allah be with Muhammad and his folk, and with them).

This religious anthropology is not merely descriptive; it has practical implications for how we are to live, how we are to orient ourselves, how we may truly serve God. Morals and politics thus become as central to theology as its more theoretical claims about human and divine nature.

Here religion must confront the social critics mentioned earlier. If they have raised doubts about God

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۱- See David M. Wulff, Psychology of Religion (New York: John Wiley Sons, ۱۹۹۱), ۲۰۴f.

on the basis of secular human values, the theologian must find a way to introduce religious values.

In Islam this introduction has two dimensions with infinite ramifications: the exterior and the interior, zahir and batin, whose first division is that of shari'ah and tariqah. Shari'ah is the exterior way, which includes Islamic law.

The law itself is infused with values, for it tells us how we are to conduct ourselves in worship and in our dealings with others.

It points toward an ideal of human flourishing in religious community under divine covenant in which the individual aspires to the complete submission of his or her own self in conformity with the law. Attention to the detail of the law is not a cold legalism by which the right to salvation is purchased, but a reflection of the pious heart seeking the completeness of submission to God.

This means that the law itself is not to be understood as a mere canon of regulations, but as infused with value as the outward realization of the inner quest for the divine.

The inner quest itself is called tariqah, which, like shari'ah also means way or path.

The verbal synonymy of these two terms indicates the inseparability of the inner and outward aspects of religion: it is logically impossible to walk down one without treading upon the other, for both are merely different names or aspects of divine .guidance

The inner quest cannot take shape except within the framework of the outward precepts of

religion; and the divine law becomes an empty formalism unless its observance is the outward expression of taqwa, the God-wariness described by Him, the Exalted, as the :best provision for spiritual wayfaring

وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَىٰ

(And make provision, and verily the best provision is taqwa." (٢:١٩٧"

The inner way or tariqah is a quest with various stages along which one must pass, and the arrival at each station requires acquisition of a specific virtue. Here the world appears as the ground to be covered, the battlefield for the greatest jihad, and the .struggle against the self

Man is understood not as a static essence, but as in a dynamic condition of transformation, or, in the terminology of Sadr al-Muta'alihin, substantial motion, whose human culmination is the perfected human being, insan kamil, the polished mirror of God, for whom the world itself is also transformed so that God is seen in all .things

The second division of exterior/interior involves the recognition that shari'ah and tariqah themselves each have exterior and interior aspects. For shari'ah there is the .external form of the law and the inward submission to it

The inward submission to the law is perfected through tariqah, whose outward expression takes the form of the spiritual instructions given by the guide to the

aspirant and whose inward form is the spiritual wayfaring itself, the passing through .stations and states and the acquisition of virtue

So, we find that Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, teaches of God and man and the

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world. Its theology includes cosmology and anthropology. The anthropological aspect has both theoretical and practical dimensions, and the practical has both exterior and interior through each of which, especially the latter, the concepts of God, the world .and humanity are informed and deepened

It is through this circle of ever deepening insight that Islam presents its own perspective on the most fundamental questions posed by man in every age. The questions are answered by drawing the questioner into a whirlpool of rational .reflection, insight, value and practice

On the social level, the drawing which gives unity to the Muslim community is symbolized by the circumambulation of the Ka'abah during Hajj. This is where the individual as well as the community focus themselves. So too, theological work must begin with its orientation toward God, circle about the related concepts of humanity !and the world, and end, finally, with reference to Him, glory be to Him

Theology presents itself in two modes. First, theology is doctrinal. It elaborates and systematizes creedal statements. Secondly, theology is suggestive. It recommends .the acceptance of its creedal statements

We could put this in another way by contrasting descriptive theology with prescriptive or normative theology. Descriptive or doctrinal theology is comparatively straightforward. Here we are busy with the attempt to understand the teachings of a religion, or the teachings of various interpreters of the religion, its theologians, .exegetes and gnostic

Normative theology is more difficult, because the standards of assessment immediately come into question. Traditionally the normative weight of theological

.reflection has been sought in the force of logical necessity

One must accept the claims of the theologian or suffer the eternal pain of contradiction. Whoever fails to accept the results of theological reasoning is threatened with the loss of his humanity, for humanity is defined in terms of the .reason upon which the theologian rests his case

This sort of approach seems offensively authoritarian to modern sensibilities, although why this should be so is seldom considered. Mathematicians and philosophers often present their results as the dictates of more or less pure reason, .and no offense is taken, not even by the most liberal of Christians

So why should anyone be insulted or offended when the same sorts of methods are applied to religion? The answer to this question will be found when it is understood that the standards of reasoning employed by traditional theology have become subject of dispute. The sorts of arguments and the methods of reasoning about theological topics whose validity has been considered obvious in the Islamic traditions of theological reflection often fail to persuade those nurtured in modern Western .culture

Insistence on the obviousness or self-evidence of our own standards of reasoning provides no remedy to this impasse. Our theological writings must offer those who do not share our views a way in, and we will not be able to provide such a port of entry until we become familiar with the intellectual geography of the points of embarkation of those whom we would have

.enter into conversation with us

If there is no common ground of sufficient breadth for meaningful discussion to take place, such ground will have to be constructed. Our language and the ways in which we use it to express our rational reflections will have to be expanded to the point that

we are able to explain the views we oppose and why we oppose them, and at the same time are able to recast the claims of our own traditions of Islamic thought in .forms accessible and attractive to others

If we are to accomplish this task of constructing a normative Islamic theology through which the world may be invited to salvation, even though the world is largely intoxicated with modern or postmodern secular Western culture, a good place for us .to begin work is by looking at the problems of Christian theology

Christian theology has been attempting to respond to modern currents of Western thought for a long time. We should be willing to learn from its successes and failures. At the same time, many of the problems of Christian theology are familiar to Muslims. How are we to explain divine knowledge, evil, the creation of the world out of nothing, life after death, and most of the other facets of our creed? For most of the topics to be found in Islamic theology, discussions may be found among Christian philosophers .and theologians

These common problems provide a point of contact. But in order to build upon these common

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issues to the point that Muslim theologians can address the concerns of those immersed in secular culture, the aim in reading what modern Christians have to say about the traditional problems of theology must be to try to see why the traditional arguments from their own tradition have come to seem inadequate, and what steps .they deem appropriate to remedy these inadequacies

It is of no use to come to the problems of Christian theology with the smug confidence that they can all be solved by means of the resources of the Islamic traditions of .kalam, falsafah and ‘irfan

Likewise, there is no guarantee that the nation in possession of the most valuable natural resources will be able to effectively use those resources in order to pursue its

.own political and economic objectives

We must learn how to use our natural and intellectual resources effectively in the contexts of the contemporary economic, political and intellectual environments, and if we are to do this as Muslims, efficiency is to be measured in units of accordance and submission to the divine will. Neither economic power nor intellectual strength has .any value for the Muslim unless he is able to place them at His service

Once we come to understand what is novel in modern Christian treatments of traditional problems of theology, and why these novel elements have been adopted, our own Islamic theology will be enriched, even if only to the extent of incorporating a sufficient amount of new vocabulary to refute the

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.modern ideas we find unacceptable

This is a risky business, and its risks need to be faced conscientiously. If we are to be successful at it, we must remain critical at every stage of the process. No doubt there will be some unfortunate souls who, in the attempt to understand modern Christian thought about contemporary theological issues, will be swept away in the currents of .thought that dominate the West

The worst way to learn is through repetition of the mistakes of others. Our learning of modern Western approaches to theological issues must be one whereby we become conversant with the language of modern religious concerns to the extent that we are .able to express our own ideas in the new language

It is of no use to repeat the expressions of the language of modern Christian theology with an Islamic accent. The language must be mastered, and fluency in the language of modern Christian theology requires an effort no less than that needed to master a new language. The stage at which learning occurs through the repetition of stock .phrases has long since past

In creative writing, the phrase finding one's voice is used for the process of learning to

master the techniques of writing to the point that one is able to develop one's own style and themes. Muslim theologians now have to find their own voices to express their concerns and views. It is not enough even to master the language of modern thought to the point of

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.professional proficiency. The pen must be wielded with a flourish and beauty

However, as Muslims we have no desire to join the cacophonous choir of so many modern writers who seek their own voices for the sake of glorying in their own individualities. Our aim is to use our newly found voices to echo the refrains of the eternal divine message, so that the attention of our listeners turns from our voices to .the message it carries

So, the first step is to find common problems. This is easy. Next, we are to read contemporary Christian responses to these problems in order to gain fluency in the .language of modern religious thought in the Western world. This is difficult

After that (or simultaneously), we can try to begin to understand the new topics and problems and approaches to them to be found among contemporary Christian thinkers: environmental ethics, the social gospel, feminism, various topics of pastoral theology, process theology, reformed epistemology, anti-realist theology, and much .more

No matter how difficult this is, it is absolutely necessary for Muslims to begin exploring these issues. We need to begin the task of trying to formulate answers to the .questions our children will soon be asking

In order for those answers to have the degree of sophistication necessary to satisfy young inquisitive minds, the urgency of these questions in modern culture must be properly appreciated, the language in which these questions are framed must be one in which we are fluent, and we

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must be sufficiently well grounded in our own traditions so that we are able to utilize that fluency to articulate answers to the new questions grounded in the glorious Qur'an and the teachings of the Ahl-al-Bayt (peace be with them), and we take refuge .in Him, the Exalted, to preserve us from error

The Relationship Between Philosophy And Theology In The Postmodern Age

When I was a student at a Catholic high school in Queens, New York, I was taught that although philosophy is the mother of the sciences, she is also the handmaid of theology. Sometimes the dialogue between philosophy and theology may have seemed to have taken the form of orders given by the theological mistress to her .erudite but obedient maid, but that was a long time ago, if ever it was at all

The idea that philosophy should be in service to theology has been rejected in the West by most philosophers, and many theologians, at least since the Enlightenment period of European thought. But instead of bringing about the emancipation of philosophy, the result has been to place philosophy at the service of her children, the .natural and human sciences

Scientific realists would determine being itself by the ultimate dictates of science. So, where does this leave the relationship between philosophy and theology? Many see it as forever broken off, and many Christian theologians think that this is to the advantage of theology. As they see it, philosophy was never a very good servant, for it was always raising more problems than it

.solved

Of course, this attitude is not unknown to Muslim scholars. It is easy to find Muslims who are suspicious of philosophy, especially Islamic philosophy; there are even those, like Ghazali, who would accuse philosophy of blasphemy. Others would be satisfied if philosophy would mind its own business and stay out of the way of theological .doctrine

Philosophy, however, refuses to be ignored. It has a way of making itself noticed even by those theologians who wish it would just go away. Philosophy accuses those who neglect her of lacking reason, and since it proclaims that reason is the difference between man and the other animals, this accusation amounts to the charge that .those who neglect her are subhuman

So, after the rise and fall of positivism, after philosophy had been declared to be a servant of the natural sciences, assigned to clean up left over questions, philosophy arrives in the new dress of philosophy of religion, coyly proffering her own questions for the theologian. On the surface, most or many of the questions are those that have been familiar to theologians for centuries: How can the existence of God be proved? How can God know what free humans will do? Can God make a stone so large that He Himself cannot lift it? How can the eternal God know the temporal material world? .And so forth

While on the surface, these appear to be the same questions familiar to theologians since reason was first applied to religion, once one becomes familiar with

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the contemporary discussions of these questions it becomes obvious that the philosophy of religion is not as innocent as she may seem. Her questions are not those .of a naive girl seeking to understand her faith as best she can

Philosophy has served the sciences for years, and its servitude to the sciences has required countless compromises with humanism, materialism, physicalism, .naturalism, and other ideologies antagonistic to religion

When it raises its questions for the theologians, the arguments of all these ideologies are ready and waiting for whatever response the theologians may offer. If the theologian responds by rehearsing the standard discussions to be found in traditional texts, whether Christian or Islamic, he will be accused of ignorance and irrelevance to .contemporary concerns

The philosophy of religion is by no means merely another name for rational theology as traditionally understood, for the very standards of reason which are applied to theological issues have changed. If the theologian is not to be caught off guard, he must be prepared to question these standards, and thus, to adopt an unfamiliar .hypercritical stance toward the cannons of reason themselves

The dialogue between philosophy and theology today is not simply an affair between the questioning mind of the philosopher and the pious spirit of the theologian. Every question comes with unspoken expectations of what sort of answer will be considered .suitable. Every search for a reason presupposes a standard of explanation

The expectations and presuppositions that inform the philosophy of religion are deeply colored by the

entire history of recent Western thought. Since many of those who write and publish in the area of philosophy of religion have been trained in analytic philosophy, the standards of analytic philosophy, which are influenced to a great degree by empiricism, positivism, pragmatism, and naturalism, play an important but subtle role .in this field

The situation is complicated by the fact that many philosophers of religion, and even more Christian theologians, are influenced more by what is often called "continental .philosophy" than by analytic philosophy

Most of the important continental philosophers have been from France or Germany, while the majority of analytic philosophers have taught at American or British universities. While philosophy in the U.S. has been dominated by analytic thought throughout most of the twentieth century, over the last ten or fifteen years, .continental thought has come to play a more prominent role in American philosophy

What is emerging is a "world philosophy", but one from which the Islamic world is largely excluded. The reason for this exclusion is not because of some conspiracy to

suppress Islamic thought, but because we Muslims have not seriously attempted to enter the discussion. If we are to enter the discussion, we must beware that it takes place in what is often hostile territory, in the context of expectations, presuppositions and standards of reasoning many of which are quite foreign to those found in the .Islamic sciences

These issues must be kept in mind before the Muslim scholar attempts to survey the questions contemporary

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philosophy of religion poses for theology, where here, and in what follows, theology is to be understood as including not merely kalam, but 'irfan nazari, religious ethics, and .even some discussions of fiqh and usul

What appears to be a dialogue between a philosopher who relies on pure reason alone and a theologian is in reality a complex discussion about philosophy, the sciences, theology and the various ideologies which have influenced these broad .areas of intellectual endeavor

Perhaps the attitude of the Muslim scholar to the complexity of the situation will be one of dismissal; the Muslim theologian might come to the conclusion that the philosophy of religion is the product of Western intellectual attitudes toward science .and religion and does not apply to the Islamic world

The conversation between philosophy and theology is really a conversation between a Western philosopher and a Christian theologian. However, we ignore the philosophy of religion at our own peril. The ideas and attitudes that inform the philosophy of .religion are not confined within the walls of a few universities in distant foreign lands

They are part of the Western cultural atmosphere whose volume is so large that it will find itself invading the Islamic world, or rather has already started invading, whether anyone wants it to or not. The international commerce in ideas-mostly Western .ideas-cannot be slowed, let alone stopped

Faced with a trade imbalance, attempts may be made to preserve local markets, but ultimately the only successful policy will be one in which locally

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manufactured products of export quality are made widely available. Since there are so many different kinds of Western intellectual products on the market, we Muslims cannot hope to gain our market share in all fields any time soon.

However, we can hope to compete aggressively in those areas in which Islamic thought has demonstrated its strength in the past, and build on this to expand into other areas. In order to compete in the international market of ideas, Islamic thought must not only answer the doubts raised by various Western thinkers, it must do so in a way that is distinctively Islamic.

We cannot simply look at the answers Christians have given and then search for an appropriate ahadith to make them seem Islamic. Serious full time work has to be done to begin to formulate contemporary Islamic theologies which are in harmony with the tradition of Islamic sciences, especially kalam, falsafah, and 'irfan.

With these points in mind, we can turn to some examples of the sorts of questions raised by the philosophy of religion for the theologian.

One of the deepest areas to be surveyed is that of epistemology. This is also an area to which medieval thinkers devoted less attention than our contemporaries. How do we know that God exists? The traditional answer given by Christians as well as Muslims was that we can formulate sound deductive proofs whose premises are self-evident and whose conclusions state the existence of God.

The problem with this answer is that many of

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the premises that seemed self-evident enough in the past have now come to be questioned.

Consider, for example, the role of the principle that an actual infinity of causes is impossible. A number of Western philosophers, physicists and mathematicians have come to doubt this principle. In defense of the principle, an important book has been written in which some of the ideas of Muslim philosophers are given attention: William Lane Craig's The Kalam Cosmological Argument.(۱)

This is one of the rare cases in which ideas from the Islamic tradition (particularly those of Abi Hamid Ghazali) have been the subject of discussion in the contemporary philosophy of religion. The continued discussion of this work in scholarly journals sixteen years after the publication of the book is testimony to its significance.

The important point is that what has seemed for centuries to be a self-evident principle is now the topic of vigorous debate. At first glance it seems that what we have here is a case of a principle of reason defended in Islamic philosophy and theology pitted against the modern skeptics of the West.

If we look closer, however, we find that the principle has undergone its own evolution within the tradition of Islamic philosophy. By the time we get to Sadr al-Muta'allihin the principle is limited to series of actual causes of existence occurring simultaneously.

The question that needs to be addressed here is how the unqualified principle came to be qualified in Islamic philosophy, for the unqualified principle was also taken

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۱- (New York: Harper Row, ۱۹۷۹)

by some (such as Ghazali) to be a self-evident principle of reason, and the version of the principle still defended by Craig is not subject to the qualification of simultaneity!

In any case, what we find here is rather typical of the philosophy of religion. Philosophers impressed with the principles employed in the natural sciences or mathematics raise doubts about what had been considered to be self-evident or

nearly self-evident principles which had been used as premises of proofs for the .existence of God

The result is an epistemological problem. What was once claimed to be known is now doubted. The doubts raised are not unanswerable, but the formulation of answers requires a fair degree of sophistication, including a certain amount of familiarity with current physics and mathematics. William Lane Craig and Quentin Smith take up the debate about the cosmological argument and the new physics in a more recent book: (Theism, Atheism and Big Bang Cosmology.(۱

Debates about the traditional proofs for the existence of God have led some to question whether proofs are really necessary at all for rational religious belief. Alvin Plantinga has become famous among philosophers of religion for his defense of what (he calls "reformed epistemology".(۲

Plantinga claims that for the devout Christian, belief in the existence of God is properly basic, that is, it doesn't need to be proved. He claims that the founder of the Reformed (Church, John Calvin, held a similar view.(۳

Calvin was skeptical about the abilities of sinful man to reason his way

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.(New York: Oxford, ۱۹۹۳) -۱

Plantinga's articles on this topic have not yet been collected in the form of a book, -۲ but two anthologies in which there are articles by him and discussions of his work are especially worth mentioning: Robert Audi and William J. Wainwright, eds., Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,۱۹۸۶), and Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds., Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, ۱۹۸۳). His definitive statement of his position is to appear in the forthcoming Warranted Christian Belief. Also worth mentioning is a book devoted to criticisms of Plantinga's ideas and his responses: James E. Tomberlin and Peter van Inwagen, Alvin Plantinga, Profiles .(volume ۵ (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, ۱۹۸۵

Plantinga's claim has been disputed by John Beversluis, who argues that Calvin and -۳ the Reformed Church object to natural theology for reason incompatible with the epistemological position advocated by Plantinga. See John Beversluis, "Reforming the 'Reformed' Objection to Natural Theology" Faith and Philosophy, ۱۲:۲, April ۱۹۹۵, ۱۸۹-.۲۰۶

to the existence of God, but Catholic philosophers, who have more faith in human reason, have also been impressed with Plantinga's position. The Catholic response to Plantinga is especially interesting because in the Shi'i tradition there has been a .similar respect for the powers of reason

I suspect that in the long run, the responses of Catholic and Muslim philosophers and theologians will be similar in being diverse.(۱) Some of the Catholic thinkers who have researched the issue have defended a foundationalist epistemology, but the majority .has sought to find some common ground with the sort of view defended by Plantinga

Another major figure who has defended the rationality of religious belief without reliance on the traditional proofs for the existence of God is William Alston.(۲) Alston turns the modern skepticism against atheism, claiming that we have no more reason .to trust sense experience than we have to trust our religious intuitions

Since the beliefs based on sense experience are considered to be rational, the same must be granted of religious beliefs. Alston's work, like Plantinga's, has generated volumes of criticism and responses, most of which focus on such epistemological questions as the nature of knowledge and rationality, faith and belief, or evidence and .justification

Other defenders of the Christian faith have argued that the doubts raised by Hume (۱۷۱۱-۱۷۷۶) and Kant (۱۷۲۴-۱۸۰۴) about the rationality of religious belief can be answered through an examination of the standards of reasoning employed in the natural sciences today, which are far from what Hume

۱- See Rational Faith: Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology, edited by Linda Zagzebski (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, ۱۹۹۳).

۲- His major work on this topic is, Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, ۱۹۹۱).

and Kant imagined.(۱)

In these discussions it is the philosophy of science to which theologians must turn in order to demonstrate to those who have faith in science but not in religion that their bias is not dictated by their fidelity to the rational standards of the empirical sciences.

In many of the discussions of the rationality of religious faith, the concept of religious experience plays a pivotal role. This is especially true of the writings of reformed epistemologists and of William Alston, but of many others as well, including Gary Gutting,(۲) Richard Swinburne(۳) and John Hick.(۴)

The concept of religious experience is one which is especially foreign to Islamic thought, for it emerged in Europe and the United States in the writings of Friedrich Schleiermacher and William James as a result of the pressure religious thinkers felt exerted by the legacies of Hume and Kant, romanticism and empiricism.

Even the very term "religious experience" is difficult to translate into Farsi or Arabic. The most commonly accepted translation seems to be tajrobeh-ye dini, but tajrobeh has the odor of the laboratory and a sense of repetition, which is absent from the Western concept.

Other terms which might be suggested each have their own problems, for example, idrak, shenakht, and ma'rifat each are appropriate only when some reality is successfully apprehended, while the term "religious experience" is supposed to be neutral as to whether it is illusory or veridical.

It is to be understood on analogy with scientific data, and just as

۱- See Michael C. Banner, The Justification of Science and the Rationality of Religious Belief (Oxford: Oxford University Press, ۱۹۹۲) and Nancey Murphy, Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, ۱۹۹۰).

۲- Gary Gutting, Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, ۱۹۸۲).

۳- Richard Swinburne, The Existence of God (London: Oxford University Press, ۱۹۷۹).

۴- John Hick, An Interpretation of Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, ۱۹۸۹).

the scientist uses reason to judge which of competing hypotheses can best explain the available empirical data, Gary Gutting and Richard Swinburne hold that the hypothesis of God's existence can best explain the data of one's inner religious feelings and intuitions.

Alston and Plantinga, on the other hand, claim that for the believer, the proposition that God exists is more analogous to the scientist's presumption that there is a physical world to be investigated and about which empirical data convey information.

They hold that religious feeling and intuitions, including mystical visions, provide data that convey information about God and His relation to the believer, information that presupposes the existence of God.

To say that according to Alston and Plantinga religious experience presupposes the existence of God does not mean that for these philosophers God's existence is a mere assumption, for they hold that the assumption is warranted, and that its warrant can be demonstrated through a rational examination of the relation between the assumption and the sorts of religious experiences that are important to Christian life.

The focus on religious experience has led some philosophers, such as William Proudfoot,[۱] Steven Katz[۲] and Nelson Pike,[۳] to an epistemological examination of the reports of the mystics. They ask such questions as whether a meaningful distinction can be made between what appears in the heart of the mystic and how he interprets this appearance, whether mystical appearances must be analogous to sensory appearances, whether mystics of various traditions all have the same sorts of

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۱- Wayne Proudfoot, Religious Experience (Berkeley: University of California Press, ۱۹۸۵).

۲- Steven Katz, ed., Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis (New York: Oxford University Press, ۱۹۷۸).

۳- Nelson Pike, Mystic Union: An Essay on the Phenomenology of Mysticism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, ۱۹۹۲).

experiences, whether training determines the sort of experience the mystic will have and whether the mystics themselves take these experiences to have epistemological significance.

Here we find a number of issues about which the philosopher and the theologian can be of mutual service. The theologian provides the philosopher with the doctrinal setting in terms of which reports of mystical experiences are understood, and the philosopher provides a critical analysis of both doctrine and report in order to place mystical experiences within the framework of a broader epistemological theory.

It is not only epistemology that serves as a source of the problems posed in the philosophy of religion for theology, virtually all the branches of philosophy have some bearing on the philosophy of religion, and raise questions about theological doctrine.

One of the most distinguished areas of philosophy is metaphysics, and metaphysics has long had an intimate relation to theology, especially to Islamic theosophy (Al-Hikmah). Muslim, Christian and Jewish theologians have often utilized metaphysical systems based on ancient Greek thought in order to explain theological doctrines.

Many religious philosophers have come to prefer other systems of metaphysics; as a result, they find themselves engaged in an attempt to restate religious doctrine in a way that does not use the language of the older metaphysics.

Sometimes, however, doctrine becomes so intertwined with the older metaphysics that they are difficult to separate. For example, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity

was stated in terms of metaphysics of substances, modes, persons and attributes drawn from

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.Roman as well as Greek philosophy

Many contemporary Christian thinkers are now willing to concede that the traditional statements of the doctrine of the Trinity in these terms have not been successful. But rather than reject the claim that God is to be understood as the Holy Trinity, they have claimed that the doctrine is better explained without the claim that God is three persons but one substance, or with an interpretation of this claim that would have .been unthinkable in past centuries

Robert Cummings Neville, the Dean of the Boston Theological Seminary, completely dismisses the claim, and defends the Trinity as three ways or aspects of divinity understood with reference to the creation. God is the source of creation; He is the end or tools of creation, and He is the very activity of creation itself, according to Neville. Aside from this, there is little left of the traditional doctrine of the Trinity in Neville's (theology.(۱

A more traditional defense of the Trinity is to be found in the work of a philosopher who teaches at Notre Dame University in Indiana, Thomas v. Morris. Morris uses the methods developed by analytic philosophers to defend a version of Social Trinitarianism from the heretical claim made by some process theologians that God is .in need of the world

Process theology itself developed as a reaction against metaphysics of substances inspired by Whitehead and Hartshorne's idea that the world consists of essentially (interrelated events.(۲

Another contemporary metaphysical idea that has had an impact on

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۱- Robert Cummings Neville, A Theology Primer (Albany: SUNY, ۱۹۹۱).

۲- See Thomas v. Morris, The Logic of God Incarnate (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, ۱۹۸۶).

discussions of the doctrine of the Trinity is the theory of relative identity. According to this idea the identity relation is always governed by the category of its terms.

Defenders of the Trinity such as Peter Geach and Peter van Inwagen have used the theory of relative identity to defend the proposition that while the persons of the Trinity may be different persons, they may at the same time be the same God.(۱)

Other areas to which philosophers of religion have applied ideas drawn from contemporary logic and metaphysics include discussions of Anselm's ontological argument for the existence of God, the many problems pertaining to the divine attributes, the nature of divine activity, God's foreknowledge and human responsibility, the nature of creation ex nihilo and the problem of evil.

Older than epistemology and at least as ancient as metaphysics is ethics. Philosophical reflections on good and evil, right and wrong and virtue and vice have always mingled with religious thought, and today, as well, philosophers whose primary concern is the nature of value and morality are raising important questions for theologians to ponder.

All of the religions systematize moral thought to a certain extent, for all religions issue imperatives disobedience to which is considered morally as well as religiously wrong. Must moral theory conform to the moral concepts embodied in religion? Can there be altruistic ideals that go beyond the moral ideals of religion? Can religion issue orders which nullify moral imperatives? Can a person be morally reprehensible without violating

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۱- See Peter Geach, The virtues (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ۱۹۷۷), and Peter van Inwagen, "And Yet They Are Not Three Gods But One God", in Thomas v.

Morris, ed., Philosophy and the Christian Faith (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame .Press, ۱۹۸۸), pp. ۲۴۱-۲۷۸

any religious law? Can a rational ethics put constraints on an acceptable interpretation of religion? How could God, who is perfectly good, order Abraham to kill ?his son

This last question was forcefully raised by Soren Kierkegaard (۱۸۱۳-۱۸۸۵), and it is still a problem frequently discussed among Christian philosophers and theologians. Kierkegaard's answer, of course, was that religion issues orders with a force beyond anything found in morality orders which from the point of view of reason, would be .considered wrong

Philosophers and theologians who are not satisfied with this fideist approach to religious commands must find a plausible reconciliation between reason and moral intuition, on the one hand, and religious rulings and actions of those considered .faultless, on the other

The question of the relation between divine commands and moral imperatives has become the focus of considerable debate among contemporary philosophers of religion largely as a result of the work of Robert M. Adams.(۱)

In his articles on divine command theories of morality, Adams has sought to reconcile the idea that actions are wrong or right because they are forbidden or commanded by .God with the idea that God's commands are not arbitrary

Adams is no Ash'arite, and will not accept the claim that if God were to command cruelty and infidelity then torture and treason would be morally praiseworthy. God's commands have moral force, according to Adams, only because God is perfectly good, just and benevolent; but without God's commands, Adams contends there .would be no moral imperatives at all

Other

Robert Adams, "A Modified Divine Command Theory of Ethical Wrongness" in Louis -۱ Pojman, ed., Philosophy of Religion (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, ۱۹۸۷), and y "Divine Command Metaethics Modified Again" The Journal of Religious Ethics .۱:۷, ۹۱-۹۷

recent publications in which the relation between religion and morality are discussed include J. L. Mackie's The Miracle of Theism(۱) and many of the writings of Alasdair MacIntyre.(۲) Mackie argues as an admitted atheist that the only ways to make sense of the relation between fact and value is either through Hume's moral philosophy or .through a religious theory

He even confesses that if no variation on Hume's theory is ultimately defensible, we should be forced to seek a religious explanation to the manner in which values seem to supervene on natural properties. MacIntyre is also interested in the fact/value dichotomy, and he explicitly seeks to refute Hume's approach to the problem, and to .refute most other modern theorists as well

But MacIntyre is not satisfied with the notion that facts are related to values by divine decree; instead he seeks to revive a version of an Aristotelian teleological ethics, but one in which perfection is to be understood by means of attention to the movement of tradition and historical narrative, rather than though biology (as Aristotle sometimes seemed to suggest).Religion becomes paramount in MacIntyre's thinking because it is only religion that is able to support the sorts of traditions and historical narratives that .can provide a firm basis for the moral life

No discussion of the way religious narratives can contribute to our understanding of, who we are and where we are headed would be complete without some attention to the issue of religious language, and this brings us

.(J. L. Mackie, The Miracle of Theism (New York: Oxford University Press, ۱۹۸۲ -۱

MacIntyre's most important books are After virtue, ۲nd ed. (Notre Dame: University -۲

of Notre Dame Press, ۱۹۸۴), Whose Justice? Which Rationality? (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, ۱۹۸۸), and Three Rival versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy and Tradition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, ۱۹۹۰). Translations of the first two of these works into Farsi are being prepared, and a Farsi summary of After virtue may be found in the journal Ma'rifat, Nos. ۹-۱۸, and .continuing

to another area in which the philosopher may be seen as posing questions for the .theologian

One of the areas of most intense activity in twentieth century Western philosophy is that of the philosophy of language. The German mathematician, logician and philosopher Gottlob Frege (۱۸۴۸-۱۹۲۵) initiated a research program in the philosophy of language concerned with such problems as sense and reference, the failure of substitution of co-referential terms in various 'intensional' contexts (for example, it may be true that S believes that a is F and true that a=b, although S fails to believe that b is F), and the logical analysis of various sorts of semantic functions commonly performed in ordinary language by demonstratives, proper names, definite .descriptions, and other kinds of terms and expressions

Frege's program was carried on by Russell (۱۸۷۲-۱۹۷۰), Wittgenstein (۱۸۸۹-۱۹۵۱), Carnap(۱۸۹۱-۱۹۷۰), Quine (۱۹۰۸-) and Kripke (۱۹۴۰-), to mention just a few of those .whose ideas about the logical analysis of language have provoked extended debate

The program of logical analysis was soon extended to theological statements. Philosophers of religion began to ask questions about the logical analysis of such claims as "God is eternal"(۱) and "God is omnipotent",(۲) and the ways in which we (may succeed in referring to God.(۳

Although these discussions may be fruitfully compared to medieval discussions of related issues in Islamic as well as Christian theology and philosophy, many contemporary Christian theologians find the attention to logical detail a bit boring, and .irrelevant to their primary concerns

Many of

۱- See, for example, Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity" in Thomas v. Morris, ed., The Concept of God (Oxford: Oxford University Press, ۱۹۸۷).

۲- See the articles in Linwood Urban and Douglas N. Walton, eds., The Power of God (New York: Oxford University Press, ۱۹۷۸)).

۳- See William P. Alston's, "Referring to God", in his Divine Nature and Human Language: Essays in Philosophical Theology (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, ۱۹۸۹).

these theologians have been more favorably impressed by Wittgenstein's later writings, and his suggestion that religious language may be compared to a game or a form of life significantly different from scientific language to prevent the possibility of any conflict between religion and science.(۱)

Wittgenstein's doctrine of language games also has attracted theologians who sought a response to the positivists' charge that religious claims were meaningless. Although the verificationist theory of meaning advocated by the positivists has been generally rejected, the Wittgensteinian slogan, "meaning is use", provided theologians with a basis in the philosophy of language for turning their attention to functionalist theories of religious language which seemed to dovetail rather neatly with the anti-reductionism popular in Protestant theological circles.

These theologians felt that any attempt to base religious claims on theoretical reason (as in the traditional proofs for the existence of God, called natural theology), or on practical reason (as in Kant's theology), ought to be rejected as reductions of religious claims to metaphysics or ethics, reductions which failed to appreciate the fundamental originality of the religious view, what Schleiermacher (۱۷۶۸-۱۸۳۴) called the religious moment of experience.

These tendencies among many (although by no means all) of those who have been attracted to functionalist explanations of religious language are largely anti-philosophical tendencies, even when they turn to the philosophy of the later

.Wittgenstein for support

Although there are many disagreements among those who find themselves supporting some variety of fideism, there is agreement among the fideists that religion does not

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See D. Z. Phillips, Religion Without Explanation (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, ۱۹۷۶) and - ۱ Norman Malcolm, Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of view? (Ithaca: Cornell University .(Press, ۱۹۹۴

.need any philosophical explanation or justification

So, after our tour through the philosophical territories bordering on theology, we find ourselves back where we started, at epistemology and the question of the rationality of religious belief, for functionalist approaches to religious language, including theories according to which religious language serves to express attitudes rather than to describe reality, are often attempts to escape rational criticism of religious .beliefs

No justification is needed, the fideist proclaims, because the language of religion is .independent of and irrelevant to the language of justification

Here the reformed epistemology of Alvin Plantinga, or the related ideas of William Alston may be seen as a sort of compromise between those who would justify religious claims by rational proof and those who deny that any such justification is .needed or desirable

What Plantinga and Alston offer is a philosophical argument as to why religious belief may be considered warranted and rational, even in the absence of direct evidential .support

Today's Christian theologians, however, are often unimpressed by the works of Christian philosophers such as those mentioned above. These philosophers are

primarily concerned with the issues of rationality and the justification or warrant that can or cannot be provided for assertions of the truth of various religious claims.

The theologians, on the other hand, often seem to be more interested in the effects in the lives of believers that are associated with adhering to various beliefs and participating in the Church. Religion is not a collection of truths about God, they

insist, but a way to salvation.

Religious symbols are important for many contemporary Christian theologians not as they serve to disclose religious truths that might not be expressible in non-symbolic language, but rather because they present a framework within which meaning for human life is to be found.(۱)

Another reason, Christian theologians have given for their antipathy toward philosophy is related to the problem of religious pluralism. In the past, Christian theologians claimed that the doctrines of Christianity were true, and that all those doctrines inconsistent with Christian dogma were false.

Among the dogmas of traditional Christianity is the claim that there is only one way to salvation-for Catholics, the Church, and for Protestants, participation in Christ's redemption of sin by faith. In short, traditional Christianity would exclude Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists from salvation and eternal felicity unless they would accept Christianity on learning of its gospel.

As Christians are becoming increasingly aware that there are good people, even saintly people, who follow a path other than that of Christianity although they are familiar with the gospel, they are finding it difficult to accept the traditional dogma that would bar the non-Christian from paradise. A number of Christian theologians are even beginning to take the view that Christian theology has been too preoccupied with the truth of dogma altogether.

In reaction to the exclusivism of traditional Christianity, according to which the

acceptance of certain truth-claims is a necessary condition for salvation, some have gone to the extreme of thinking that the

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See Gordon Kaufman, "Evidentialism: A Theologian's Response," Faith and - ۱ Philosophy, ۶:۱ (January ۱۹۸۹), ۳۵-۴۶, and the response by Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Theologically Unfashionable Philosophy," Faith and Philosophy, ۷:۳ (July ۱۹۹۰), ۳۲۹-۳۳۹, and the defense of Kaufman's position by James A. Keller, "On the Issues Dividing Contemporary Christian Philosophers and Theologians," Faith and Philosophy, ۱۰:۱ (January ۱۹۹۳), ۶۸-۷۸ and James A. Keller, "Should Christian Theologians become Christian Philosophers?" Faith and Philosophy, ۱۲:۲ (April ۱۹۹۵), .۲۶۰-۲۶۸

truth of religious doctrines is insignificant, and attempts to justify religious beliefs or show them to be rational are irrelevant to the issue of salvation.

Instead of occupying themselves with the central questions of traditional theology, constructing proofs to support doctrines, analyzing the logical structure of various religious concepts, and defending their interpretation of doctrines against rivals, many if not most contemporary Christian theologians have turned their attention to questions about how religious concepts develop and change, how they function in religious communities, how religious ideas inform religious experience, and how Christian symbols, practices and institutions have been used and abused by Christian communities in various historical and social contexts.

When these theologians turn their attention to questions of ethics, they are concerned about how to prevent the future abuse of Christian symbols, practices and institutions and how to encourage what they consider to be the positive and morally responsible development of the various elements of Christian life, although there is often a lack of critical reflection on the philosophical perspective which informs their own moral standards.

Many believe that claims to have religious knowledge or certainty reflect a sinful

.desire to gain intellectual control over what must remain ultimately a mystery

Today's Christian theologians are much more interested in postmodernist thought than the work of Christian philosophers trained in the analytic tradition. Postmodernism is a movement which has emerged from the ideas of certain contemporary French writers such as Jean-Franbois Lyotard,(۱) Jacques Derrida,(۲) (Georges Bataille,(۳) and Michel Foucault.(۴

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۱ - Jean-Franyois Lyotard, tr. G. Bennington and B. Massumi, The Postmodern .(Condition (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, ۱۹۸۴

۲ - His major work is Of Grammatology, tr. G. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, ۱۹۷۴), but especially relevant to contemporary Christian theology is Derrida and Negative Theology,ed. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany: SUNY .(Press, ۱۹۹۲

۳- Georges Bataille, Theory of Religion, tr. R. Hurley (New York: Zone Books, ۱۹۸۹).

۴ - Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, tr. A. M. Sheridan-Smith (New York: Harper Row, ۱۹۷۲), also see the biography, James Miller, The Passion of Michel Foucault (New York: Simon Schuster, ۱۹۹۳) in which the relation between Foucault's .writings and his sado-masochistic homosexuality is explored

these writers have in common is a generally cynical outlook, skepticism about the transcendental claims characteristic of the modern period of European philosophy from Descartes (۱۵۹۶۱۶۵۰) through Kant (۱۷۲۴-۱۸۰۴), the suspicion that rational argument is a screen hiding desires for power, the idea that we cannot escape the cultural presuppositions which largely determine our worldview, and an irreverent .style

Many of the postmodernists look to Nietzsche (۱۸۴۴-۱۹۰۰) for inspiration. Contemporary Christian theologians who are reluctant to defend or try to justify Christian doctrine, some of whom even admit agnosticism, find common cause with

the postmodernists.(۱) Postmodernist writings do not really offer the theologian a set of philosophical questions of relevance to theology as we found with the philosophy of religion.

Instead, the postmodernist offers consolation to the fideist theologian for his reluctance to attempt to show that his beliefs are reasonable and excuses for not engaging in the reasoned defense of the truth of his beliefs.

Postmodernism is not a philosophy, but an intellectual movement against philosophy as traditionally understood. Traditionally, the term philosophy functions as an encomium–it is not merely descriptive, but has a strong evaluative sense.

To imply that postmodernist thought is not philosophy, but anti-philosophy, is to express allegiance to the traditional ideal of philosophy as love of Sophia, as a quest for the truth which the postmodernists find somewhat preposterous.

In castigating postmodernism as anti-philosophy, however, I do not mean to be dismissive. Postmodernism is a very important trend that has had a profound influence on many

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۱ – For a collection of essays in which postmodernist thought is seen as offering resources for Christian theology see Faith and Philosophy, vol. ۱۰, No. ۴ (October ۱۹۹۳).

(۱) Christian theologians.

The philosophy of religion as practiced by Christian philosophers with training in analytic philosophy may be understood as a movement that to a large extent is diametrically opposed to postmodernism.

To the postmodernists, the Christian philosophers seem a bit naive–still arguing about how to defend the rationality of asserting the truth of various religious doctrines. To the philosopher, however, what room remains for religion in the confines of postmodernism is little more than a sentimental attachment to the symbols and

rituals of religion shorn of the metaphysical or transcendent significance which gives them their power and is responsible for the strong emotional response they provoke .in the first place

This is a claim. I suspect that most of my readers will agree with it, and that we do not have to look very far to find arguments to back it up. The claim is that the strength of the hold on the human imagination exerted by religion as evidenced by phenomena as diverse as the Islamic Revolution in Iran and allusions to religious themes in contemporary American fiction depends on the fact that religions allege that they contain truths that are absolute, truths that go beyond the particularities of their .expressions in various cultural contexts

The questions of whether or not this allegation is correct, and whether it is even rational to believe it, are central to contemporary discussions of the philosophy of religion. For this reason alone, the skepticism of the postmodernist is important and .requires a response

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۱ - Postmodernism is also starting to attract the attention of students of Islamic thought. See Akbar S. Ahmed, Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise (London: Routledge, ۱۹۹۲) and Ernest Gellner, Postmodernism, Reason and Religion .((London: Routledge, ۱۹۹۲

But aside from how this response is formulated, there is this other question of whether postmodernism can provide a philosophical perspective from which theology is more profoundly understood or whether it undermines theology by denying that it .has any real connection with Ultimate Reality

The Christian postmodernists and many, if not the majority, of contemporary Christian theologians contend that the question of the truth of religious doctrine can be dismissed without damage to religion, at least without damage to Protestant Christianity, because the focus of the evangelical's religion is salvation rather than .(gnosis (Ma'rifah

This contention is dubious for several reasons. First, because the vast majority of believers, past and present, of the world's religions have understood their religions as making important claims about reality. Any denial of the importance of religious truth is a distortion of religious thought.

Second, in Islam and Christianity, the Ultimate Reality is known as God, and the practical, symbolic and social dimensions of religious life are directed toward obedience and worship of God as the means to salvation.

If claims that God exists are dismissed as naive, then the doubts generated about the reality of the object of worship threaten to make the meaningfulness of worship doubtful. Without God, worship is pointless, and without meaningful worship, there is no salvation.

Third, the aura of the sacred and feelings of holiness generated by religion seem to involve the idea that the sacred provides us with a vehicle by means of which the mundane is to be

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transcended, the merely perspectival is to be escaped.

In revealed religion, particular historical events are designated as revelation, and with this designation Christians and Muslims cease to see Jesus (AS) as a merely historical personality, and Muslims cease to see the Qur'an al-Karim as a mere artifact of early medieval Arabian culture, but as the Word of God.

This transformation of awareness from the mundane to the sacred is accomplished by means of a recognition of an ontological status for the Source of revelation, so that without the metaphysical dimension of religion, the rest of it, including the salvific potency of its symbols, the feelings of obligation to respect its commandments, the attachment to participation in its rituals, all would weaken and wither.(۱)

The above discussion of postmodernism prepares the way for a return to our original question about the relation of philosophy to theology. Despite the fact that religious

authorities might feel threatened from time to time by questions that arise out of unfamiliar philosophical discussions, many of whose participants are indeed hostile toward religious authority, if not toward religion itself, ultimately the theologian .cannot escape an involvement with philosophy

Perhaps the most persuasive reason we can offer to the theologian is that the philosophical criticisms of religious ideas that plague the minds of the young require a .philosophical response if the young are to be guided

Even if no amount of merely philosophical expertise will be sufficient to remove doubt, some philosophical wisdom is necessary in order to engage

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۱ - Worthy of attention is Huston Smith's defense of the religious world view over the postmodern proclamation (issued by Richard Rorty) that "There is no Big Picture": "Postmodernism and the World's Religions" in The Truth about Truth, ed., Walter Truett Anderson (Los Angeles: Jeremey P. Tarcher, ۱۹۹۵), an address originally delivered in Kuala Lumpur for a symposium on "Islam and the Challenge of Modernity", and later revised without references to Islam as "The Religious Significance of Postmodernism: A Rejoinder" in Faith and Philosophy ۱۲:۳ (July ۱۹۹۵), .۴۰۹-۴۲۲

the sincere seeker in the spiritual work of rising above the widespread Satanic .suspicions that religion is little more than a pack of lies

The presence of philosophical doubts in the minds of the young was also the reason given to Ayatullah Burijirdi by 'Allamah Tabataba'i for publicly teaching philosophy in Qom. Philosophy presents itself to theology as a servant without whose help, the !mess philosophy herself has made cannot be cleaned up

But there are other reasons for theology to graciously accept the services offered by philosophy. Allah has graced the human mind with a thirst for wisdom, and the wisdom sought includes knowledge of the things of which religion speaks, as well as

skill in practical evaluations and the sort of precision in which logicians, .mathematicians and physicists take pride, and other things, such as history, as well

The philosophical quest is one that propels the seeker to some degree of understanding of all these areas and an attempt to fit them together. From time to time philosophy might devote too much attention to a single dimension of understanding, resulting in waves of logicism or empiricism or historicism, but the structure of the human spirit ultimately cannot be satisfied with a narrow slot from .which to view reality

I am told that Sohravardi Maqtil said that a person who is not able to leave his body at will is not a real philosopher. I am not sure what this means, but it suggests to me the philosophical need to

escape the confines of a physical perspective, the need to succumb to what some (have derided as "the transcendental temptation". (۱

Theology, on the other hand, is much more limited than philosophy. The business of theology is not to offer a comprehensive theory of reality, but merely to show that .there is a Supreme Reality and how this is related to lesser things

Without some attention to philosophy, the business of theology is not likely to be very profitable, because we do not get a very clear picture of God's relation to the world .unless we pay some attention to what the world is supposed to look like

This does not mean that theology has to give an absolute stamp of approval to some particular metaphysical speculation, but theologians should not shy away from metaphysical issues either. Theology is well served by philosophy if it interacts with philosophical ideas without developing a dependency for a single philosophical way of .doing things

Philosophy, too, perhaps finds its true vocation in service to theology. For, if philosophy is to fulfill its goal of providing an intelligible comprehensive synthesis, it

must make room for theological truth and knowledge of that truth, that is, by providing for the needs of theology. This becomes the worship of philosophy, to be at the service of theology; and as in all things human, the highest degree of perfection is to be approached through worship of Allah, recognizing one's own faqr before al-Ghani.

Human Thought, Divine Wisdom, And Islamic Philosophy

In order to steer

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۱ - See the defense of atheistic skepticism by Paul Kurtz, The Transcendental Temptation (New York: Prometheus, ۱۹۸۶).

a middle course between two extreme positions to be found among contemporary Muslim thinkers similar to hard rationalism and fideism in Christian thought, it is suggested that reflection on the universality of philosophical speculation with respect to religion reveals that the rational philosophical defense of religious thought should not be abandoned, but that philosophy must be understood as including much more than that which is associated with the famous ancient Greek philosophers and their legacy.

In order for Islamic philosophy to flourish and to serve Islam, it should be developed beyond the confines of its own heritage without neglecting that valuable heritage. It should aspire to the wisdom and humility exhibited by the prophets, ever since Hadrat Adam, peace be with all of them.

The word 'philosophy' is derived from Greek, but what is denoted by this word is something whose origins cannot be confined to the Greek city-states of the millennium before the life of Hadrat 'Isa, not even if we construe philosophy rather narrowly.

Often, Thales of Miletus (c. ۶۴۰-۵۴۶ B.C.) is taken to be the first philosopher of ancient Greece. A descendant of Phoenician immigrants to Greece, he taught that even

stones and seemingly dead matter were full of life. He had a mystic's appreciation of .nature, and claimed that everything was full of gods

Some historians conjecture that his most famous belief, “that the universe began from water”, was something he adopted from Egyptian lore.(۱) Regardless of whether or not it is proper to regard Thales as

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.Cf. Peter Gorman, Pythagoras: A Life (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, ۱۹۷۹), ۳۵ -۱

the first ancient Greek philosopher, we can be sure that he was not known by the term 'philosopher' in his own time, for the term was coined by followers of one of the .most important students of Thales, Pythagoras

Thus the inventors of the word 'philosophy' were the members of a secret cult of .ascetic mystics, the Pythagoreans

Ancient Greek philosophy is often divided between pre-Socratic philosophy and that which came afterward. Others consider Socrates to have been the first real Greek philosopher. In either case, Socrates is certainly one of the most important of the .ancient Greeks to have become known as a philosopher, that is, a lover of wisdom

While the etymology of the word philosophy provides some clue to its proper meaning, this meaning has become rather more specific than that suggested by the simple love of wisdom. Ancient Greek philosophy is the foundation upon which the .history of Western philosophy, the sciences and the humanities all rest

Because of its foundational position for Western thought, some writers define philosophy as that chain of ideas which includes the giants of modern European thought, such as Descartes, Hume and Kant, and which can be traced back through the Christian medieval period to Greece, Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, or Thales, one of .whom is to be designated as the originator of genuine philosophical thought

But if we begin to wonder about the origins of Greek philosophy, and if we try to find

some reason for choosing one of the above figures above

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the others as the true father of philosophy, then the definition of philosophy as the .chain of thought including the well known greats will not be satisfactory

The earliest links of the chain seem so different from the later links that it seems impossible to say whether any particular ancient Greek thinker should be included or .not

In order to answer the question of which Greek should be considered the first philosopher we must abandon the definition of philosophy solely in terms of the chain of teachers and pupils and turn instead to the question of what characterizes .philosophical thought

Finding the essential character of philosophical thought is no easy matter. Certainly it should not be characterized as any particular set of doctrines, although there have .been periods in which such an identification was popular

Thus, when Ghazali wrote his Tahdfut al-Falasifah he was not attempting to refute philosophy as a topic or set of topics for reflection and investigation, but to refute specific doctrines associated with the mix of neo-Platonic and Aristotelian thought whose major champion was Ibn Sina. As far as method and subject matter are .concerned, Ghazali was no less a philosopher than Ibn Sina or Ibn Rushd

It would have been more precise if Ghazali had titled his book Tahafut al-Falsafah Ibn Sina, but the thought of Ibn Sina had so come to dominate the philosophical thought of the Islamic world that philosophy itself was identified with the doctrines taught by Ibn Sina and his followers. This line

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of thought was a form of rationalism which Ghazali branded as heresy (bid'ah) because he considered the conclusions it advanced as dictated by reason to be not

only contrary to religion but based upon faulty arguments in which reason overstepped its own limits.

The idea that philosophers make unwarranted claims on behalf of the intellect became the object of Mawlavi Jalal al-Din Rumi's sarcasm in the Mathnavi.[1]

Mawlavi claims that the philosophers sin in two ways: first, they overestimate the power of the rational intellect; and second, they fail to appreciate the importance of a more direct form of knowledge through illumination.

The philosopher is in bondage to things perceived by the intellect;

the pure rides as a prince on the Intellect of intellect.

Know that knowledge consists in seeing fire plainly,

not in prating that smoke is evidence of fire.

O you whose evidence, in the eyes of the Sage,

is really more stinking than the evidence of the physician,

Since you have no evidence but this,

O son, eat dung and inspect urine!

O you whose evidence is like the staff in your hand indicating that you suffer from blindness!

Noise and pompous talk and assumption of authority (means)

"I cannot see: excuse me."[2]

The object of Mawlavi's ridicule is not just any form of philosophy, but is the same form of philosophy against which Ghazali inveighed. The association of philosophy with medicine in the second passage quoted above recalls the fact that Ibn Sina was as famous a physician as a philosopher.

Clearly, Mawlavi does

This subject is the topic of a paper delivered by Dr. Abd al-Karim Soroush at the ۱۹۹۲ -۱ Conference on Greek Orthodox Christianity and Islam in Athens. The topic is also addressed by William C. Chittick in The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi, (Offset Press, ۱۹۷۴), and .(later in his The Sufi Path of Love,.(Albany: SUNY Press, ۱۹۸۳

.Mathnavl, Bk. vI, ۲۵۰۵ f -۲

not mean to include Socrates among those he finds guilty of 'noise and pompous talk', for Socrates, like Mawlavi, was engaged in exposing the ignorance of those who proudly but falsely claimed to know. Plato, as well, does not seem to fit Mawlavi's image of the philosopher, for he was just as emphatic as Mawlavi about the .importance of illumination over finding evidence and engaging in syllogistic reasoning

Even Aristotle does not entirely fit with the image Mawlavi portrays of the philosopher, for he was much more concerned than the medieval Aristotelians to point out problems (aporiai) for which he could offer no clear cut solution (like the problem of substance in the central books of the Metaphysics, or the problem of .(future contingents in De Interpretatione

The most interesting question that is raised by these reflections is how neo-Platonism and Aristotelianism came to be considered as an official philosophy, a rationally authoritative set of doctrines, rather than the tentative speculation suggested by the Greek thinkers. How did the unresolved problems that were so important for Aristotle move to the sidelines so that bold claims for reason should dominate? How did philosophy become corrupted, dogmatic and proud, when it began in wonder? However, to pursue these questions would be to abandon the task we have set for .ourselves of characterizing philosophy

Philosophy can neither be defined in terms of a single chain of teachers and pupils, nor can it be defined in terms of a set of doctrines. At the same

time it is important to try to characterize philosophical writings in such a way that we might distinguish them from religious texts and from what is sometimes referred to as .wisdom literature

Of course, we do not wish to claim that no religious texts are to be considered as philosophy, nor should we deny the philosophical content of some wisdom literature. We are looking for a way to distinguish falsafah from Hikmah, philosophy from .wisdom, while allowing for the possibility that the two may overlap

Since we have already ruled out historical succession and doctrinal content as means to identify philosophy, there appear to be two alternatives left to us: subject and .method

Since the time of Aristotle, metaphysics, or first philosophy, has been defined as the science of being qua being, and the Muslim philosophers generally accepted this definition. This definition, however, does not provide a means to include all the .branches of philosophy

Philosophy has the following branches: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, logic, and aesthetics. There are other branches of philosophy as well: the philosophy of law, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of science, the philosophy of medicine, social and political philosophy, philosophical anthropology, the philosophy of mind, etc. The .'etc.' is important

There seems to be no way to eliminate it, no list whose claim to being exhaustive could not be undermined by the development of a new branch of philosophy. We need some way to know when a new branch of human inquiry should be considered as

a kind of philosophy, and when it is something else, psychology, ideology, or cultural .criticism, for example. We may hope to find some criterion by turning to method

Philosophers differ from sages because of their employment of reason, it is sometimes said. While the sages draw wisdom from folklore, religion, mythology, and other elements of culture, the philosopher is held to rely on pure reason. But surely the sages employ reason as well. This seems to be implied by Mawlavi's claim that the pure ones ride on the Intellect of intellect.

Sometimes it is said that although all science makes use of rational principles, philosophy is unique in relying on reason alone, with no appeal to empirical findings. Two objections will be raised here. First, there are sciences other than philosophies that rely on reason alone, the sciences of pure mathematics, such as number theory and Euclidean geometry.

Secondly, philosophy, or at least some of its branches, on close inspection does not turn out to be completely immune from empirical discoveries and the ideas abstracted from them. There is no clear line that divides the philosophy of mathematics from pure mathematics, or pure mathematics from applied mathematics.(۱)

Reason seems to be used in the same way or perhaps to shift only gradually as we move from a particular science to the philosophy of that science. Metaphysical theories have been proposed on the basis of philosophical reflection on elementary particle physics, cosmology, and even biology.(۲)

The questions seem to be different.

۱- See Morris Klein's Mathematics: The Loss of Certainty (New York: Oxford, ۱۹۸۳).

۲ - For example, see Elliott Sober's From a Biological Point of view (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ۱۹۹۴).

The questions of a science are internal questions, questions that seem to presuppose that their answers can be found through a continuation and extension of the methods currently employed in the field.

Questions concerning a particular science seem to break out of the confines of established modes of inquiry in two directions: at one end there is the matter of applications, and at the other, philosophy. Reason, however, is relied upon equally throughout the spectrum; it is equally vital to the design of a machine and to .speculation about the nature of being

Since philosophy is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the applied sciences, it is tempting to define philosophical method as non-empirical in some sense, even if it is granted that no theorizing is completely immune from ideas that spring more directly .from reflection on observation and measurement

Even if philosophy does not rely entirely on reason alone, and experience can be an avenue for uncovering philosophical truth as well as rational reflection, still, philosophers do not attempt to formulate their theories in ways designed to allow for .empirical confirmation or refutation

In the end, it seems that if we are to be honest, we must admit that we cannot provide an exact definition of philosophy which will include all that is traditionally considered to belong to the field while excluding the special sciences. Perhaps we do not really know what philosophy is, or maybe we do know what it is, but only in a vague way

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.which eludes our attempts at exact definition

The closest we seem to be able to come to identifying philosophy is by means of its subject and method, by saying that philosophy includes metaphysics, epistemology, .ethics, aesthetics, logic, and inquiries into the foundations of the special sciences

The method of philosophy is rational as opposed to empirical, but this does not mean that empirical investigations are irrelevant to philosophy. For example, the results of empirical investigations have led to the development of quantum theory, which has raised a number of interesting philosophical questions about the nature of matter and

energy, and the displacement of Newtonian physics by relativity theory has done .much to undermine some of the central theses of Kant's philosophy

To admit that philosophy must be cognizant and responsive to developments in the empirical sciences is not, however, to say that the method of philosophy is empirical. The tool of the philosopher is reason, but this is not very informative, for it is a tool used by students of the natural sciences and the humanities. There is no 'ilm that does .not require reason

The methods of philosophy are analysis and synthesis, and in both special attention is paid to logical rigor. Synthesis is an attempt to provide explanations at a quite general level often by constructing a theory or model, or by advocating a project through which such explanations are to be given. For example, materialism is a theory the acceptance of which requires a rejection of all explanations

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.that contain in eliminable reference to non-material entities

This requirement creates special difficulties in the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of mathematics, and many other areas. Thus materialism generates a program of attempting to provide a uniform type of explanation for various phenomena in all the .fields of human inquiry

Utilitarianism in ethics provides another example of a programmatic theory by means of which explanations are to be provided for the various moral features of life. Each .broad philosophical thesis or theory generates its own problems

The successful defense of a philosophical thesis requires that the thesis be shown to be free from contradiction, that it can be integrated within a general philosophical outlook, that the problems it generates are interesting and seem susceptible to solution, that the thesis can be applied in various areas and that it provides interesting .insights into the areas in which it is applied

The application of a thesis to a specific area of inquiry often requires the employment

of the other major philosophical method, analysis. Analysis can take a number of forms. There is linguistic analysis, conceptual analysis, and other types of analysis. .Perhaps they can all be lumped together as ways to analyze problems

When Socrates asked 'What is justice?', he was extending an invitation to engage in philosophical analysis. Some will respond by speaking of how the word 'justice' is used, and of its etymology; others may respond by considering how people generally think about justice; still others will try to explain what justice

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is by placing it within a broader philosophical theory. So, the methods of synthesis and .analysis are complementary

By synthesis theories are constructed through which problems are to be analyzed; and analysis proceeds by providing an account of a problem in accord with a more general theory, or by showing how the problem may be solved by means of the .theory

So, for example, Heidegger will provide an analysis of a problem by sifting through the etymologies of the relevant terms involved, picking out the most salient issues thus suggested, and then providing some thesis about the problem which incorporates the points brought out in his analysis, often by extending a train of thought to be found in .several thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition

The process of philosophical analysis and synthesis takes place in a context of criticism. At each stage, the work of the philosopher is subject to the criticisms of others working in the same area. Objections are raised when a theory has counterintuitive consequences, when it contains a logical flaw, or when the .arguments produced in its support are found to be unsound

Philosophical theories are also criticized for their inability to handle important problems, or even when they lack elegance. The main method of philosophical criticism is the analysis of arguments. Here the importance of logic comes to the fore,

since it is by logic that arguments are identified and evaluated as valid or invalid. Logic, however, is not always capable of providing insight regarding the

.truth of the premises upon which a given argument is based

For the evaluation of premises, sometimes an appeal will be made to empirical investigations, sometimes to rational intuitions, and sometimes further argument will be suggested. A complete characterization of the philosophical methods sketched .here would require a text on logic and critical thinking

Indeed, such books are numerous, and have been throughout the history of philosophy, which they have helped to shape. However, enough has been said to .indicate in a rough way what may be understood as philosophy

Philosophy is that field of inquiry which includes the subjects of metaphysics, epistemology, etc. and which employs the method of analysis and synthesis in a context of logical criticism. Given this understanding of philosophy, we are sufficiently armed to challenge the claim that the exclusive origin of philosophy lies in ancient .Greece

Philosophy can be found in ancient China, India, and Africa. By philosophy here we do not mean only the wise pronouncements of sages or religious figures, but the critical employment of reason in analysis and synthesis directed to some of the central issues .of metaphysics, ethics, etc

A word should be said about religious thought. Some religious thought is devotional, and some of it expresses illuminative insights, some of it concerns pronouncements of doctrine, but sometimes also it is philosophical. The meeting place of religious and philosophical thought is sometimes described as the philosophy of religion and .sometimes as philosophical theology

Occasionally these can be distinguished. The philosophy of religion

can be understood analogously to the philosophy of mathematics, or the philosophy of history. It is philosophical inquiry into the most foundational questions concerning religion: the nature and attributes of God, the relation between religion and ethics, and apparent paradoxes involved in religious belief. Edgar Sheffield Brightman, who advocates a very broadly understood empiricism (including inner experience as well as sense perception), defines philosophy of religion as follows:

Philosophy of religion is an attempt to discover by rational interpretation of religion and its relations to other types of experience, the truth of religious beliefs and the value of religious attitudes and practices.

Philosophy of religion is a branch of metaphysics (specifically of axiology) which interprets the relations of man's experience of religious values to the rest of his experience.(۱)

Philosophical theology is the employment of philosophical method to address important questions of theology under the assumption that a given theological creed is correct. The term, “philosophical theology" is used in other senses by various writers: for some it is equivalent to the philosophy of religion,for others it is the same as natural theology, some insist that philosophical theology, qua theology, must limit its attention to a particular creed, although it may include attacks as well as defenses.

However, even in the rather narrow meaning employed here, in which philosophical theology has a specific creed as its topic, the credibility of which is defended by what passes for a philosophical style of argumentation, real philosophy often arises out of philosophical theology. As

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۱ - Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Philosophy of Religion (fifth printing) (New York: Prentice Hall, ۱۹۴۷), ۲۲.

theologians employ critical methods to debate differences of opinion among those

who accept a given creed, eventually critical attention may be turned to the most basic assumptions shared by those who confess a common faith; these assumptions may well include ideas about reality, truth, rational belief, value, and other topics of .philosophical controversy

We must be careful, then, not to dismiss all theological discussions as unphilosophical. In the Islamic tradition, for example, there is much true philosophy to be found in kalam. The early mutakallimun owed much in their perception as well as their analysis of the problems that they addressed to the concepts developed by grammarians of .the Arabic language

By the end of the third century after the hegira, one of the central occupations of the mutakallimin of Basra was the systematic explanation of the ontological implications .associated with the use of Arabic predicates, sifat

While they were certainly interested in specifically theological questions about the nature and attributes of God, they developed much more general theories about the (existence of things indicated by subjects and predicates.(١

The tradition that began in ancient Greece is especially distinguished by its length and the volume of literature it has produced, by the number of its branches, and by the .depth of insights which continue to attract new students

The glory of the Western philosophical tradition, which includes Islamic philosophy as one of its most important branches, must not, however, blind us to the existence of traditions of philosophical thought which

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Cf. Richard M. Frank, Beings and Their Attributes, (Albany: State University of New -١ .York Press, ١٩٧٨), p. ١۴

developed independently of Greek philosophy. Of these, the most notable are Chinese .and Indian philosophy

Centuries before Socrates began his philosophical career, the Indians of South Asia were reflecting critically on their universe and doing metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and philosophical theology.[۱] Chinese and Buddhist philosophers who were contemporaries of Socrates also developed a philosophical dialectic based on a tradition of thought which extended back for some centuries.

In many ways the critical reflections of Eastern philosophers are similar to those of Western philosophers. Both Eastern and Western philosophers are preoccupied with questions about the nature of man, the universe, reality, and the ultimate. There are also more specific areas in which similarities between Western and Eastern philosophy are especially obvious.

Early in both traditions materialism asserted itself as a philosophical alternative to the more prevalent modes of thought, and in both traditions thinkers are to be found who placed more emphasis on experience or on reason for acquiring human knowledge. Finally, both groups also saw in this questioning a great opportunity for self-improvement.

One of the most important areas of philosophy to have been developed independently in Greece, India and China is logic. The earliest known work in the Indian tradition on logic is the Tarka-Sastra of Gotama, which has been estimated to have been composed in ۵۵۰ B.C.

This work included two subjects, the art of debate (tarka), and the means of valid knowledge (pramana). By the second century C.E., the subjects of syllogistic reasoning and the examination of contemporaneous philosophical

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۱- Cf. R. T. Blackwood and A. L. Herman, eds. Problems in Philosophy: West and East, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, ۱۹۷۵), p. ۷. Most of this paragraph is paraphrased from the introduction to this work.

doctrines had been added to Gotama's work and the whole became known as the

.Nyaya sutra

While some have speculated that the syllogism in Nyaya may have been influenced by the Aristotelian syllogism, which may have come to India through Alexander, this is highly conjectural, and most contemporary historians seem to think that the Indian syllogism developed independently of Greek thought.(١) This work served as a foundational text for the subsequent development of Indian logic among various .Buddhist and Jain as well as other Hindu philosophers

Logic is said to have originated in China with the work Motzu of Mo-ti who is believed to have died before ۴۰۰ B.C. Mo-ti discusses truth and falsity, affirmation and denial ('with a view to produce order and avoid disorder.'(٢)

He describes a method of philosophical analysis and comparison of elements as well as a method of synthesis. Analysis comes from reason and ends with evidence. .Synthesis groups together various facts and ends in a conclusion

Practical and theoretical reasoning are also distinguished. The discussions to be found in the Mo-tzu are not merely the pre-philosophical fragments of a sage, but display a .highly refined degree of logical sensitivity

The philosophy developed by Mo-ti influences a long line of Chinese philosophers known as Moists and they interacted with thinkers of other Chinese schools of .thought by criticizing them and being criticized

There is also some speculation that Greek thought may have entered China by way of ,Bactria and the Alexandrian conquest, but again, this is highly speculative

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١- See the article 'Logic' in the Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Paul Edwards. For the conjecture of the Greek connection, see Satis Chandra vidyabhusana, A History of .(Indian Logic, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, ١٩٧١

٢- Cf. Leo Wieger, S.J., A History of the Religious Beliefs and Philosophical Opinions in

.China, Edward Chalmers Werner, tr., (New York: Paragon, ١٩۶٩), p. ٢١٣

and in any case Mo-ti's work was completed long before Greek or Indian influence (would have been possible.(١

Only those who are ignorant of the logical discussions in the Nyaya school of Indian philosophy or the Moist school of Chinese philosophy and the dialectic which took place between the advocates and critics of these schools could claim that philosophy as it has been defined above has its exclusive origins in Greek thought. Excuse for such ignorance is no longer possible since a number of books have been published in which Indian and Chinese philosophy are described in addition to those mentioned .above

In addition to books, there are several philosophical journals in which new research in these areas is published: Chinese Studies in Philosophy, the Journal of Indian .Philosophy, and Philosophy East and West

In recent years a number of studies of African philosophy have also been published, although it is difficult to make any definite pronouncements about ancient African .philosophy since it was carried out in the context of an oral culture

Nevertheless, to declare that ancient Africa was without philosophy, without reasoned analysis and theorizing about various issues in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, etc., is to commit the fallacy ad ignorantium, to conclude that something is not .the case simply because we have no positive evidence

Even Dr. Shari'ati, despite his familiarity with Fanon and his commitment to the oppressed, complains of those Europeans who are ignorant of the rich culture of Iran and imagine Iran to be without culture, 'like

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.Cf. Weiger, p. ٢٨۶ -١

.'Africa

It seems to have been a slip, but it is one that is all too common; and even if such remarks are not motivated by a latent nationalist sentiment, misplaced pride or racism, they are certainly capable of fueling vicious attitudes. This is the dark side of the denial of non-Western philosophies: it may be an indication of something more .sinister than ignorance

In pride, the philosopher says that only I have the ability to understand deep truths, to make fine distinctions, to appreciate great subtlety; only I can reason. And since reason is the specific difference of the human, it follows that only I am human-I and my teachers in the line stretching back to ancient Greece. In the language of many .tribes, the word for a member of the tribe and the word for man are the same

In opposition to this exclusivist denial of the universality of philosophy, we may speak of the philosophy of Hadrat Adam (Peace be with him). This alludes to the fact that it is characteristic of human nature to raise questions about reality, knowledge, goodness, beauty, soundness of reasoning, and to seek to find foundations. And it is characteristic of human nature to pursue answers to these questions through the .methods of reason: dialectic, analysis, synthesis, criticism, speculation

:It is written in the Qur'an

“And He taught Adam the names, all of them...” (۲:۳۱).

According to Ibn 'Arabi, these name are the Names of God, although the commentators sometimes claim that for reasons having

to do with Arabic grammar the names cannot be of attributes, but must be of living things. The argument is not decisive, since it is possible that the attributes are .personalized as a figure of speech

If Adam's knowledge was of the Names of God, this could be taken to be a symbol of analysis through which the divine reality is understood in terms of the multiplicity of Names. The Names are multiple while the essence of God is simple and unitary. By

learning the Names, Adam learns to analyze the divine simple unity in terms of its relations with created things as a multiplicity of attributes.

Even if the names Adam was taught are not to be understood as the Divine Names, but of some other realities, the originality of Adam's position with respect to the One Creator, and the knowledge given of a multiplicity of names certainly suggests the problems of the one and the many, of naming and reference, and of human knowledge. These allusions add to the propriety of allowing that the wisdom of Adam was, at least in part, philosophical.

Adam was the first philosopher. This means that philosophy, as we have described it above, is characteristic of human nature, and that philosophical problems may be associated with the knowledge given by God to Adam as related in the Qur'an.

Mulla Sadra has described the wisdom of Adam as follows:

Know that wisdom (Hikmah) originally began with Adam and his progeny Seth and Hermes, i.e., Idris,

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and Noah because the world is never deprived of a person upon whom the science of Unity (tawhid) and eschatology rests. And it is the great Hermes who propagated it (Hikmah) throughout the regions of the world and different countries and manifested it and made it emanate upon the "true worshippers". He is the "Father of the philosophers (Abu'l-hukuma') and the master of those who are the masters of the sciences.(۱)

To speak of Adam as a philosopher is to go beyond the claim of the universality of philosophy and to introduce a religious element to the discussion. The philosophy of Adam is religious. From the secular Western point of view this sort of claim will sound odd to the point of absurdity.

Not only atheists, but also Western Christians who consider themselves enlightened, think of Adam as a mythical figure, a character from the tales of the ancients with no

relevance to the rational analysis of philosophical problems and the scientific cast of .mind typical of the modern philosopher

On the other hand, those religious people with a narrow sense of piety will consider it contrary to religion and debasing to the prophet Adam to describe him as a philosopher. Prophetic knowledge, they will argue, is by revelation and has no need .for the paltry methods of reason

We may respond to the attack on our Western flank by pointing out that philosophy has a mythic dimension that is overlooked by those with a positivistic outlook. Philosophy is a kind

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Risalah fi'l-huduth, in Rasa'il fadr al-Dln Shlrdzl, (Tehran, ۱۳۰۲), p. ۶۷. The passage is -۱ cited and translated by S. H. Nasrin "Hermes and Hermetic Writings in the Islamic .World" in his Islamic Studies (Beirut: Librairie Du Liban, ۱۹۶۷), p. ۶۹

of quest motivated by love. The traces of this original love can even be found in such .irreligious Western thinkers as Russell and Sartre

It is the desire to free themselves from the recognized illusions of past thinkers that motivates their rejections. It should come as no surprise that the love of truth might .inspire one to deny the truth

The mythic dimension of the philosophical quest for truth is a recurrent theme in the philosophical literature of the Western tradition. Many authors have already .emphasized the point that what makes for myth is not falsehood

Important truths may be contained in myths. A story, like the story of Adam, may be called a myth because it is legendary, it has been passed to us from antiquity rather than having been discovered through scientific historical research; but this does not mean that it is false! Rather it is a falsification to deny the mythic dimensions of the .philosophical quest and to deny its points of contact with the religious journey

With respect to those who would deny the philosophy of Adam from a religious point of view, if they persist in their objections even after our explanations of what we mean by this attribution and they understand that we do not mean to claim that we know the position of the first prophet, Peace be with him, on a number of controversial philosophical questions, nor do we make any positive claim even to the effect that the prophet had any philosophical views

on any particular philosophical issues, if they nevertheless persist in their opposition even after this, then we shall begin to suspect that their opposition stems from a .desire to protect religion from rational inquiry

There are many theologians and philosophers of religion in the West today who share this sentiment. They are called fideists. They hold that there are higher standards than those of reason by means of which beliefs are to be evaluated, and that with respect to such standards; religious beliefs are to be dearly valued even if they are in .opposition to the standards of reason

One of the most important Christian philosophers to espouse fideism was Soren Kierkegaard (۱۸۱۳-۱۸۵۵). It is important to understand that Kierkegaard's fideism .springs from a rejection of the claims on behalf of reason made by Hegel

During Kierkegaard's age the followers of Hegel seem to have thought that reason by itself was sufficient to show the place of man and God in the universe and to provide the foundations for religious faith. In reaction against the excessive claims made on behalf of reason, Kierkegaard seems to have gone to the opposite extreme of .denying any relevance of reason or philosophy to religion

Particularly important with respect to Muslim-Christian dialogue is Kierkegaard's attitude toward the Bible. Muslims have traditionally reminded Christians of the dubious historical evidence for the authenticity of the Bible, and have compared lack of information about the origins of the Bible with the relative abundance of data about the revelation of the

.Qur'an. The response of Christians has often been surprisingly nonchalant

Of course, a significant number of Christian theologians are engaged in extensive historical research about the origins of the Bible. However, I believe one more commonly encounters a lack of interest in the question, and in some cases even hostility. Such reactions are not simply expressions of unreflective dogmatism, but of the widespread theological view that religious matters are independent of objective .truth, and may even be opposed to it

The lesson taken from modern forms of biblical criticism is that the spiritual value of Scripture is independent not only of the shortcomings of its literal interpretation, but of any claim to objective historicity. This view finds strong expression in the works of Kierkegaard. He argues that even if the Bible were proven absolutely authentic, it would not bring anyone closer to faith, for faith is a matter of passion and is not the .result of academic investigations

Furthermore, he claims that the scientific establishment of the authenticity of the Bible would actually be detrimental to faith, because passion and certainty are incompatible. On the other hand, Kierkegaard claims that even if the Bible were shown to be inauthentic, that its books were not by the supposed authors, and that it lacked integrity, it would not follow that Christ never existed, and the believer would .still be at liberty to retain his faith

Karl Barth, perhaps the most influential Protestant theologian of the twentieth .century, takes a remarkably similar view

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He is willing to accept historical criticism of the Bible, but claims that faith does not depend on the historical accuracy of beliefs. Christ transcends history. The danger here is that in the rejection of historical, scientific, philosophical or rational criticism, one ensures that no evaluation from outside can threaten one's religious beliefs.

.Narrow mindedness is protected

The second most important philosophical influence on contemporary Christian fideism is Ludwig Wittgenstein (۱۸۸۹-۱۹۵۱). Wittgenstein's fideism is in some ways more moderate than Kierkegaard's. He holds that in different areas of life different 'language games' are played, and that confusion results when the rules of one game are applied to another game to which they are not applicable. The rules of science do .not apply to religion

According to Wittgensteinians, the proper place for reason is in science. In religious belief something else appears to be operative. Against this view one may point out that both religious and scientific discussions tend to obey the logical laws characteristic of rational thought. Where they differ is in the relevance of empirical .findings, particularly those of a quantitative nature

However, it is not at all clear why philosophical reason should be considered the province of that which depends on empirical data and the formal sciences instead of on revelation. The logical principles that are shared by different scientific, religious, and other traditions seem to violate the idea of strict autonomy that Wittgenstein .defends

Perhaps the greatest problem for the Wittgensteinian idea of the autonomy of religious belief is

that of incommensurability. Wittgenstein himself complains that he is not sure how religious and non-religious people are able to understand each other. Since it is clear that they are able to understand each other, religious and non-religious languages .are not completely independent

But if they are not completely independent, then the possibility of mutual criticism arises, which the doctrine of autonomy denies. If we are to have spiritual progress, we must be willing to face challenges, not to cut ourselves off from the possibility of

challenge. If our religious ideas are to have sufficient flexibility to find proper application in all the spheres of our lives, religion must be permitted to leak out from .the confines of ritual procedure and otherworldly preoccupation

Finally, there is the problem of demarcation. Where does one language game end and another begin? If religion is a form of life analogous to science, how are the various religious traditions to be treated? Are they like competing scientific theories? There is .good reason to think not

Buddhism and Judaism are so disparate that it does not make much sense that they are alternative attempts to describe the same reality. Perhaps they are as different from each other as each is from quantum theory. Perhaps they are like different branches of science. But this is wrong, too. The various religions do compete with one .another in some sense

The Qur'an speaks not only to Muslims, but directly addresses Jews and Christians, idolaters and infidels, and if the Qur'an

p: ۹۸

employs it own specific concept of rationality, it is one which others are expected to be able to understand. Furthermore, the different branches of the sciences merely .focus on different aspects of what is agreed by all to be a common reality

In any case, there is little one can find in Wittgenstein or his followers to assist in determining how traditions of thought are to be classified, when they are to be seen as competitors and when they are to be seen as autonomous. To the contrary, the very existence of the philosophy of religion and philosophical theology indicate that .there is no line of demarcation that separates religious from philosophical thought

In practice the two often merge. Indeed, the philosophical critique of religious ideas is necessary if we are to adequately defend our beliefs, even privately within our own souls, from the charge that we have gone astray, that religious emotion has prompted us to accept absurdities. Like every other area of culture, if isolated from

.intellectual commerce, religion will suffer the depression of a ghetto economy

Against our rejection of fideism, we might imagine the protest of Mawlavi: when the mother offers milk to her child, is the child to seek evidence that this is in fact nourishing milk, and that it is offered by its own mother? The immediate recognition of the truth needs no evidence. We can grant the insight of Mawlavi without going as far as he seems on occasion to have done, without rejecting

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.the relevance of philosophy to religion

It may be admitted that there are circumstances in which it is inappropriate to look for reasons and evidence, not only in religion, but also in the sciences and mathematics, and in virtually all the areas of human inquiry. A large part of wisdom in philosophical investigation is to know what things are to be questioned and what things are to be accepted without further questioning. An unregulated demand for reasons and .evidence only brings skepticism

Philosophical reason is a tool, a vehicle. By itself, it can go nowhere. Syllogisms can be constructed ad nauseam without taking one a step closer to the truth of any matter, but the judicious use of logical technique and the other methods of philosophy may .transport us distances which we would otherwise be unable to traverse in security

For the key to the religious element in the philosophy of Adam we may turn again to the Mathnavi. Adam's employment of reason was combined with humility. Even though he was taught the names and the angels prostrated before him on account of his knowledge, when he sinned he admitted his mistake and turned in humble .repentance toward God

Mawlavi contrasts this attitude with that of Iblis, who uses his reason in order to excuse his disobedience. The philosophy of Ibis is a philosophy tainted by pride. The .philosophy of Adam is a philosophy purified by humility

Today, in the Muslim world as well as among Christians, there is a discussion of

what role philosophy can play vis a vis religion. On the one hand, there are those who hold that philosophy provides a rational foundation for religious belief and a general framework for the interpretation of religious beliefs through which the truth of basic .religious beliefs may be demonstrated

This has been the dominant view among Muslim philosophers from Ibn Sina to those inspired by the teachings of 'Allamah Tabataba'i. (١) Another school of thought among Shi'i scholars, known as maktab-e tafkik, denies that philosophy can or should serve as a basis for religion (the word tafkik indicates the separation of religion from philosophy).(٢) Both groups seem to have valuable points to make, although both can .also easily pass beyond the limits of plausibility

The exaggerated claims of rationalist philosophers to be in possession of deductive proofs for religious claims which must be accepted by all reasonable persons invites the response that given the fact that atheists seem to be no worse at logic than theists, faith must be independent of reason. But to abandon reason is to deny the .(birthright we inherit from Hadrat Adam (AS

What we must deny and seek to separate from religion is Iblisi philosophy, the pride that overextends the claims of human reason. What we must seek is the wisdom of the prophets (AS) ,including the latent philosophical reasoning to be found there, a humble reason, but one which keeps a firm hand on the reins of the passions and emotions, not to stop them, but to

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١ - One of the most prominent of these philosophers is Prof. MisbahYazdi, whose Amuzesh-e Falsafeh has been translated as Philosophical Instruction: An Introduction to Contemporary Islamic Philosophy, tr. M. Legenhausen and 'A. Sarvdalir .((Binghampton: Global Publications, ١٩٩٩

٢ - See Muhammad Riga Hakimi, Maktab-e Tafkik (Qom: Markaz-e Barressiha-ye .(Islami, ١٣٧٣/١٩٩٤

!direct them on the straight path, insha'Allah

Empiricism And The Philosophy Of Islam

One of the most important topics of debate among Muslim intellectuals and scholars today is about the scope of Islam. All Muslims affirm that Islam is a complete way of :life, and God Himself has revealed in the Qur'an

On this day I have perfected for you your religion and I have completed my blessing“ .(for you, and I have chosen for you al-Islam as a religion...” (۵:۳

But does this mean that Islam contains orders pertaining to all the arts and sciences, for example, regarding how to conduct research in mechanical engineering and economics, or must Islam confine itself to prescriptions for how to perform prayers, write a will, etc., with the understanding that these matters of ritual observance are sufficient for an entire life? Not only the learned, but the masses of Muslims are also concerned with this sort of question, for the ordinary Muslim wants to know how to .submit to the will of Allah in all the aspects of his life

We expect our religious scholars to tell us whether Islam forbids contraception, the recreational use of drugs, lotteries, and a host of other items about which there is controversy, and the scholars of Islam answer our questions by formulating rulings based on the Qur'an and authoritative narrations, but there are also broader questions about the scope of Islamic thought: Is there any such thing as Islamic ?economics? What about Islamic sociology, astrophysics, microbiology

Within the intellectual history of

the Muslims, there have been traditions of study of various fields such as mathematics, astronomy and philosophy, and often these traditions are called Islamic mathematics, Islamic astronomy, and Islamic philosophy, respectively. The question .then arises as to whether these traditions have a normative or prescriptive value

It is fairly clear that it would be a mistake to think that Islam contains rules for how to think about the stars and planets and that these rules are systematized in Islamic astronomy, but when we turn from astronomy to philosophy, the situation becomes a bit more confusing because Islamic philosophy has been developed at least in part as an attempt to provide a religiously satisfactory approach to the problems of .philosophy

And even with regard to Islamic astronomy, the Islamic dimension is arguably deeper than the fact that Muslims developed it, for it formed a part of a coherent intellectual perspective that was integrated with various other elements of Islamic thought and .science

The sorts of questions mentioned above pertaining to the scope of Islam and its implications for the sciences and humanities, and particularly for philosophy, may be said to comprise the subject matter of the philosophy of Islam. The philosophy of Islam is clearly distinct from Islamic philosophy, for while the latter term is used for the tradition of philosophy developed by such Muslim thinkers as Ibn Sina, Sohravardi and Sadr al-Muta'allihin, the philosophy of Islam is the study of the philosophical .scope and implications of the religion of Islam

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The philosophy of Islam is also distinct from 'ilm al-kalam, which consists of the systematization of Islamic doctrine and its rational defense. The philosophy of Islam is concerned not with doctrine and its defense but with drawing out the philosophical .ramifications of doctrine and their limits

It may be useful to compare the philosophy of Islam with the philosophy of physics and the philosophy of religion. The philosophy of physics is the study of the philosophical problems fundamental to physics, problems related to physical theories, but for which solutions cannot be directly obtained from experimental evidence, as .with various problems pertaining to the nature of time, space and motion

Often a philosophical viewpoint seems to be presupposed in a given physical theory,

and the philosophy of physics concerns itself with the elucidation of such views and their philosophical evaluation. When we turn to Islam, we find that some of the philosophical problems fundamental to it, such as the existence and attributes of God, .are shared by Judaism and Christianity

These problems are thus allocated to the philosophy of religion. What remains for the philosophy of Islam are such questions as what sort of philosophical psychology can best account for the Qur'anic revelation, the implications of the doctrine of wilayah for political philosophy, and more generally, what sorts of views are consistent with, most .appropriate for, or implied by Islamic teachings

Furthermore, since Islamic teachings themselves have been interpreted and expounded in a variety of ways by mutakalimin, Hukama' and 'urafa, all

p: ۱۰۴

of these questions about the philosophical ramifications of Islamic teachings may be .repeated with qualifications indicative of a more particular interpretation

So, for example, one may ask about which philosophical theory of religious experience is most appropriate to the relevant discussions in Ibn 'Arabi, or what sort of epistemological theory can best account for the discussions of doubt and certainty .found in the works of uwul al-fiqh

The philosophy of Islam may thus be seen as a broad field of philosophical research pertaining to the guidance which Allah has provided for mankind through His religion: [.("Inna al-dln 'inda Allah al-Islam". ["Verily, the religion of Allah is Islam."(۳:۱۹

A good example of the kind of study to be included in the philosophy of Islam is an inquiry into the relation between Islam and empiricism. Is Islam inconsistent with empiricism? Is there some form of empiricism that is demanded by Islam? Is Islam ?more compatible with rationalist than empiricist philosophies

An examination of such questions is not only useful for embarking on study of the philosophy of Islam, but it is worthwhile because empiricist philosophies have had

such influence on modern and contemporary Western thought that a proper grasp of the relations between Islam and empiricism is essential for an understanding of the scope of Islam and its philosophical relations to Western sciences and humanities. But before one can engage in such an inquiry it must be known just what empiricism is.

After the Renaissance, when European thought was seeking to escape the structures

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and strictures of scholasticism, two prominent modes of philosophical thought began to take shape: rationalism and empiricism.

Both the rationalists and the empiricists actively sought to formulate alternatives to the Aristotelian features of medieval philosophy. Both the rationalists and the empiricists attacked the Aristotelian understanding of reasoning and science. The rationalists did this by proposing to limit the notion of rationality to its more calculative aspects and by restricting the self-evident to the most subjective certainties.

The empiricists, on the other hand, were less interested in reason as such and emphasized the role of sensory experience in the acquisition of knowledge. The leaders of rationalism in modern European philosophy were all natives of the European continent: France, the Netherlands and Germany were the homes of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz during a period which spanned the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The most famous of the modern empiricists were all eighteenth century British philosophers: Locke, Berkeley and Hume, although precedents can be found for empiricist thought in Britain extending as far back as Roger Bacon and William of Ockham.

Among more recent philosophers, empiricism continues to exert a strong influence, so that William James referred to his version of pragmatism as "radical empiricism", and Rudolf Carnap, after giving up on Logical Positivism, called his philosophy "Logical Empiricism".

What all the various forms of empiricism have in common is an emphasis on the importance of experience for human knowledge and a tendency to doubt that which cannot be established on the basis of

the evidence of the senses.

Empiricist philosophies come in all shapes and sizes, religious as well as atheistic, extreme and moderate. An extreme form of empiricism which is also religious was espoused by the Bishop Berkeley who denied the existence of a physical reality beyond the sensory appearances with which we are directly acquainted.

Another extreme form of empiricism has been more recently advocated by Bas van Fraassen who believes in the existence of physical objects such as tables and chairs which can be seen with the naked eye, but who denies the existence of such things postulated by modern physics as electrons and photons of which we have no direct experience.(۱)

In one form or another, empiricism has had a tremendous influence on the development of the sciences in the West. No history of the sciences from physics and biology to psychology and economics would be complete without mention of the influence of empiricist thought on the advancement of these subjects.

The influence of empiricism is not limited to the sciences, however, but also extends to ethics and politics. Empiricists have tended to analyze the good in terms of the satisfaction of desires and practical reason in terms of efficiency in obtaining the good so defined.

In politics they have inclined toward social contract theories or utilitarianism, analyzing justice as that which accords with the rational agreement of members of a society in pursuit of the maximal satisfaction of their desires, or as the maximal satisfaction of the desires

.(Bas C. van Fraassen, The Scientific Image (Oxford: Clarendon Press, ۱۹۸۰ -۱

.of the greatest number of people

Empiricism, however, is fundamentally neither an ethical nor a political philosophy, but rather is often described as founded on two basic principles: first that all ideas are derived from experience, and second, that proper judgment must be supported by experience. Locke, as well as Berkeley and Hume, held that we have two kinds of .experience: sensation, or external experience, and reflection, or internal experience

These two kinds of experience were held to provide the foundations of all knowledge. Knowledge of necessary truths, such as the truths of logic and mathematics, were held to derive from inner experience of the relations among ideas, while empirical knowledge of contingent truths was held to derive from the outer experience of the .senses of vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch

What then does Islam have to say about empiricism? There are two commonly given answers to this sort of question which are as superficial as they are extreme. The first answer is that Islam and empiricism are perfectly consistent because each is confined to a separate and exclusive realm. The second answer is that Islam and empiricism are diametrically opposed because each presents a view of man and the cosmos .contradictory to the other

The first answer is that given by various proponents of an Islamic modernism or Islamic reformation modeled on Christian Protestantism. They would limit Islam to a few rituals and the personal relation between the individual and God so as to make room for Western modes of

.thought and institutions in politics, economics, philosophy, etc

Nevertheless, the modernist answer regarding empiricism is not as easy to dismiss as one might like to imagine. If we define empiricism as the doctrine that all ideas and

knowledge are derived from inner or outer experience, it is difficult to see what is objectionable about this from the point of view of Islam. Even the Prophet's (SAW) knowledge of revelation could be explained as deriving from a kind of inner .experience

The founder of empiricism, John Locke, was a Christian who believed in divine revelations, authentic claims to which, he believed, were supported by the empirical evidence of miracles. If there is an incompatibility between Islam and empiricism, it .must be found at a deeper level than the bare statement of its fundamental principles

As the influence of empiricism spread, it was the emphasis on outer experience that won the allegiance of researchers and scientists. Medieval science seemed to them to have been overrun with presumptions that could not be established by sensory experience, nor proven by the mathematical aspects of reason favored by the .rationalists

For example, it was held that since the planets were the most perfect of bodies and circular motion is the most perfect kind of motion, the orbits of the planets must be .circular

The rejection of this sort of argument was made possible by two sorts of changes in thinking about science, both of which involved a shift in the view of rationality itself. First, the

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Greek idea of rational intuition or nous had to be dismissed and replaced by a much more limited notion of rationality; and second, the value of the collection of precise empirical data had to be elevated to a level that could overcome the appeal of rational .intuition

These are the changes that were brought about by the combined efforts of the rationalists and the empiricists. What remains of the notion of rationality leaves no .room for the religiously reflective intellect or 'aql

The word 'aql, which is translated as 'intellect' or 'reason' occurs in verbal forms forty-nine times in the Qur'an. If one inspects these ayat, one finds that the operative notion of 'aql in the Qur'an is neither the Greek nous nor the modern Western notion of rationality, although the meaning of nous is certainly closer in meaning to the .Qur'anic term than the English rationality

The Qur'an speaks of examples being given for people to think about, for people who use their 'aql. The things of the earth and heavens, the cycling of night and day, the coming to life of a dead land, all of these are signs of Allah, and the failure to .recognize them as such indicates a lack of 'aql

The faculty of being able to recognize the ultimate significance of things cannot be glossed as syllogistic reasoning, nor as the evaluation and formulation of modern scientific theories. While empiricism concerns itself with the nature of appearances, 'aqlis concerned with seeing through the appearances

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.to the deeper reality behind them, with insight and disclosure

On the other hand, we do not find a direct contradiction between the reasoning of the empiricist and the exercise of 'aql. The defenders of traditional Islam often point to the differences between modern and traditional concepts as if this were sufficient to establish that the modern is deviant and to be rejected. However, an appreciation of the methods and findings of the empirical sciences by no means need undermine the .value of religious reflection

The approaches to the philosophy of Islam to be found in the writings of both modernists and traditionalists are much too facile to comprehend the complexity of .the discord between Islam and empiricism

The modernist ignores the discord because of the absence of outright contradiction. The traditionalist ignores the possibility of accommodation because of the disparity of outlooks, and because whenever accommodation is mentioned with regard to Islam

and modernity, it seems to be accompanied by an expectation that Islam must be .changed

Liberals call for the "reform" of Islam in order to disguise their desire for its disablement. Traditionalists respond with a glorification of the past. Neither seems capable of imagining that the modern might be reformed to come into accord with .Islam

Empiricism is flawed by its unduly restrictive view of rationality. If this view is modified to allow for the rational appreciation of symbolic signification, nothing of essential .value in empiricism is thereby lost

,Empiricism, like the modern sciences whose development it influenced

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is at odds with Islam because it is informed by concepts which have been used as .replacements for those found in the Qur'an and ahadith

The problem with the modern concept of rationality is just one example of this. The solution is not a rejection of the new concepts, but a rejection of claims that they supersede those of the Islamic traditions. In the rejection of superficial modernism and traditionalism we may also find a more satisfying approach to the fundamental problem of the philosophy of Islam, identifying the scope of Islam and its implications .for the sciences and humanities, and particularly for philosophy

Although Islam cannot be said to contain its own particular microbiology, for example, and for the most part neither contradicts nor implies particular theoretical claims in the natural and human sciences, it does present man with various ideas and concepts which proponents of the sciences or some new philosophy would supplant by those of .their own theories

Here there is an opportunity to advance a new meaning for the idea of Islamic reformation: it is not that Islam is to be reformed in the light of modern theories, but the reverse. The exaggerations of human importance and negligence of Allah which

often accompany any form of learning are to be purged by an Islamic reformation of .such learning, God willing

Allamah Tabataba'i And Contemporary Philosophical Theology'

Philosophical Theology' is a term that has been employed in recent years among' philosophers and theologians in the West to designate a specifically philosophical approach to

theological issues. During much of the twentieth century, philosophical theology has .not been taken very seriously either by philosophers or by theologians

Philosophers have found fault with philosophical theology because of the lack of philosophical sophistication of the writings in this area. Theologians, on the other hand, have expressed little interest in philosophical theology because of the irrelevance of the attempts at analysis and careful argumentation to the living concerns of theologians preoccupied with the integration of religious thought in .contemporary social life

Over the course of the last twenty-five years, however, this situation has changed. Philosophers whose technical expertise is widely recognized have started writing .works of philosophical merit on theological topics

The Western rejection of religion took place for two kinds of reasons: reasons having to do with the apparent opposition between religion and science, and reasons having to do with social, political and moral views. In recent years there has been a shift in .attitude among intellectuals in both these areas

There is a greater appreciation now than there was in the heyday of positivism that science need not be seen as antagonistic toward religion, and epistemic theories are currently being advanced which would allow for the rational justification of both .scientific and religious beliefs

The social, political and moral attitudes that were prevalent prior to the ۱۹۷۰'s are being displaced by views that are critical of liberal/leftist thought. The current resurgence of philosophical theology benefits from both these kinds of attitudinal changes, even as it indirectly encourages

p: ۱۱۳

.them

At the same time as these developments have been taking place, theologians have begun serious debate about the significance of non-Christian theologies for Christian thought. Theologians such as John Hick, W. Cantwell Smith and Hans Kung have argued vigorously that the doctrine that salvation can be achieved exclusively .through the Christian tradition is not rationally defensible

While maintaining their own allegiance to the Christian tradition, they have suggested that the doctrines of the divinity of Christ and the trinity should be reinterpreted, and they have been willing to concede that there may be some sense in which the Qur'an .may be admitted to be the word of God

Theologians discuss such questions under the rubric of religious pluralism. Although in recent philosophical theology the issue of religious pluralism has not been central, an (increasing amount of attention is being turned in this direction.(۱

In this context we may well wonder what, if anything may be found in recent Islamic thought which may be of relevance to Western philosophical theology. Sometimes Western writers have been dismissive of the prospects of finding anything of philosophical interest in recent Islamic thought because their acquaintance has been limited to Muslim writers who lack philosophical erudition or who are even hostile to .philosophy

However, in the Shi'i philosophical and theological tradition we find ample materials of significance to the questions raised in philosophical theology by Christian philosophers. Certainly one of the best ways to become familiar with Shi'i

philosophical theology is through the works of 'Allamah

See Muhammad Legenhausen, Islam and Religious Pluralism (London: al-Hoda, - ۱ .(۱۹۹۹

.Tabataba'i

His authoritative position in the Muslim world as an exegete of the Qur'an, coupled with his philosophical expertise gives his work a stature which demands greater notice than it has yet received by students of comparative religion and philosophical .theology

Perhaps some of our Muslim readers will ask why Muslims should be concerned about trying to address problems which arise in the context of Western philosophical .theology. There are several reasons

First, by means of the formulation of a Muslim response to such issues, a respect may be won for the Islamic tradition which, unfortunately, has often suffered due to political enmity. Secondly, it provides the opportunity to familiarize those who often restrict their view of Islamic thought to the middle Ages with the living tradition of .Islamic philosophical theology

Thirdly, such intellectual engagements contribute to the development of depth of awareness of the complexity of the issues involved, and may promote the further .development of Muslim thought on a variety of issues

The recent increase in interest in philosophical theology in the West is symptomatic of a sincerely felt need to take religion seriously once again, after it had been discarded by many intellectuals as incompatible with a modern scientific outlook. Many who had .drifted away from the churches are returning

However, the problems that caused the original dissatisfaction with religion have not been solved. In the West, the problems with Christianity have been typically

.generalized and considered as problems with religion per se

Few, have considered the possibility that

Islam may be immune from the failings which led to their dissatisfaction with Christianity. For example, one of the most important Christian doctrines is that of the .trinity

Yet it has been generally conceded by theologians since the Middle Ages that this is a doctrine which must be accepted as a matter of faith, where faith is understood as a way of accepting that which cannot be accepted according to the standards of reason. Modern theologians have gone further to admit that this doctrine is a mystery .incapable of rational defense

Various contemporary philosophers of religion, such as Peter van Inwagen and Thomas v. Morris have attempted to provide a philosophical defense of the rational coherence of the doctrine. This is a place where the relevance of 'Allamah .Tabataba'i's thought is immediately apparent

Much of the philosophical discussion which is scattered throughout his exegesis of the Qur'an, Al-Mizan, is designed to demonstrate the incoherence of Trinitarian doctrine .and to defend belief in a strict divine unity

Many of the relevant passages have been collected by the late Ayatollah Husayni Tehrani in his volume, Mehr-e Taban. The inherent rationalism of Islamic theology is clearly displayed in these discussions, and the contrast with the irrationalism of tendency found in much modern Christian theology to confuse mystery with .incoherence is made readily apparent

On the other hand, 'Allamah Tabataba'i's writings on topics of Islamic mysticism or 'irfdn display a sensitivity and deep appreciation of a true mysticism which is rational even if it

expresses itself in apparent contradictions. Thus, the writings of 'Allamah Tabataba'i not only presents us with an example of an Islamic theology, which is at once .contemporary and rational, but also a rational mysticism

On the other hand, the student of Western philosophy who is used to looking for the distinctive and original elements in a philosopher's thought may miss the significance .of 'Allamah Tabataba'i's works

Allamah is a defender of a school of thought originated by Mulla Sadra and called' transcendent wisdom. This philosophical outlook has an influence on contemporary .Shi'i theology somewhat analogous to the influence of Aquinas on Catholic theology

Much of what is of significance in 'Allamah's philosophical theology may be found in the works of Mulla Sadra or Nasir al-Din Tusi, but rather than detracting from its importance, this only serves to underscore the consonance of 'Allamah's theology .with the tradition in which it is situated

Like contemporary Western philosophical theology, 'Allamah's theology makes use of careful definitions, deductive proofs, and fine distinctions among rival positions. These are features which the broadly analytic tradition in Anglo-American philosophical theology share with the Shi'i tradition, which reflects the taste for logic in Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and the tremendous influence this, has had on subsequent Islamic .philosophy

However, the intuitions about what can be accepted without argument differ widely between analytic philosophy and Islamic philosophy. The Western student of Islamic philosophy must therefore learn to suppress the tendency to dismiss arguments for being based on implausible premises, and learn

to seek beyond the stated premises for more fundamental rational intuitions, which .are often at odds with contemporary Western presumptions

The most striking difference between contemporary Christian and Muslim theologies is that while Christians believe that God is a person, Muslims worship a non-personal deity. Despite the importance of this difference for a host of theological issues, it is a .difference that has gone largely unnoticed by Christians and Muslims alike

Yet Christians everywhere will affirm that God is a person, while the average Muslim will readily deny this. Theism is often defined by philosophers of religion who work in .the Christian tradition in such a manner as to require the belief that God is a person

Thus The Encyclopedia of Philosophy has it that, "THEISM signifies belief in one God (theos) who is (a) personal, (b) worthy of adoration, and (c) separate from the world (but (d) continuously active in it."(١

John H. Hick admits that, "Theism ... is strictly belief in a deity, but is generally used to mean belief in a personal deity."(٢) Richard Swinburne states that a theist is one who believes that there is a God who is a "person without a body ((i.e.) a spirit) who is eternal, free, able to do anything, knows everything, is perfectly good, is the proper object of human worship and obedience, the creator and sustainer of the universe",(٣) and J. L. Mackie, while arguing the case of atheism, endorses (Swinburne's definition of theism.(۴

One can surely find no better

.H. P. Owen, 'Theism', The Encyclopedia of Philosophy (١٩٧٢), vIII, p. ٩٧ -١

John Hick, Philosophy of Religion, ٢nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, ١٩٧٣), -٢ p. ۵

.Richard Swinburne, The Coherence of Theism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, ١٩٧٧), p. ١ -٣

J. L. Mackie, Tjhe Miracle of Theism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, ١٩٨٢), p. ١ -۴

representative of contemporary Christian philosophical theology than William P. Alston, whose works are a model of analytic precision and reflective insight. He writes that God, as construed in theistic religions, is "a supreme or ultimate personal agent

(that acts in the light of knowledge, purposes, and intentions."(۱

The tendency of Alston, and the other writers mentioned, is to emphasize the similarities between God and man. One reason for this is that it is assumed that if God is treated as a being who, is excessively unlike man, any claims made about God will become incoherent. The idea is that in the case of human beings, we know what it .means to make decisions, to know various things, and to act

So, if we want to know what it is we are talking about when we attribute knowledge, decision and action to God, we should mean something closely analogous to what we mean in the case of human beings. One of the most extreme results of this tendency .among Christian theologians is the process theology of Charles Hartshorne

Hartshorne held that the medieval concept of God was incoherent and proposes that God be considered more like a person, such that God should be considered to change, .to improve Himself, to exist in time, to increase His knowledge, etc

Alston, who was a student of Hartshorne, rejects these claims, but he tries to develop a theology which will preserve the claims of divine transcendence associated with medieval theology while retaining as much

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۱- William P. Alston, "The Perception of God," Philosophical Topics, vol. ۱۶, No. ۲. Fall ۱۹۸۸, p. ۲۵. Alston's principle works in philosophical theology are collected in two volumes: Divine Nature and Human Language (Ithaca: Cornell, ۱۹۸۹), and Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, ۱۹۹۱).

.as possible of the personalistic view of God

Another reason for the emphasis on the personal nature of God in modern Christian theology is that this is seen as being more faithful to scripture. Much of modern Christian theology has reacted to the philosophical attacks on theology found in Hume .and Kant by divorcing itself from philosophy altogether

It is held that medieval Christian theology went astray by employing Greek philosophical concepts instead of working exclusively with the concepts found in divine revelation. This view has been contested by Robert Cummings Neville, who argues that Jewish thought had already been Hellenized prior to the time of Christ, and that the opposition between the perspectives of Athens and Jerusalem have (been over emphasized.(١

In the Shi'i theological tradition there was also a period in which some held an extremely anthropomorphic view of God, but this tendency was thoroughly refuted and rejected as unorthodox at an early stage by scholars such as Kulayni (d.٣٢٩/٩٤١) and Shaykh Saduq (d. ٣٨١/٩٩١), who gathered sufficient reports from the Prophet and Imams (Peace be with them) to demonstrate decisively that the anthropological .language used to describe God must always be understood as figurative

The thought of 'Allamah Tabataba'i must be understood as holding a position in the long tradition of philosophical theology encouraged by these early scholars. This is a tradition in which the key to the resolution of apparent conflict between reason and religion is to be sought in proper interpretation. Characteristic of proper interpretation

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.Robert Cummings Neville, A Theology Primer (Albany: SUNY Press, ١٩٩١), p. ۵-۶ -١

in the Shi'i tradition is authorization by reports attributed to the Imams (peace be with them), rationality and frequent indication of a depth of spirituality associated with .Islamic mysticism

A word of caution is appropriate regarding the attribution of rationality to esoteric interpretation in the Shi'i tradition. What is meant here is by no means the conception of rationality that informs the empiricist or scientific philosophies of the West, rather, by claiming that esoteric interpretations of scripture in the Shi'i tradition are rational is meant that they contribute to a systematic theological picture, a picture which is drawn with conscious attention to the logical relations between the concepts and .doctrines expounded

So, we find two contrasting approaches to apparent conflicts between religion and science. The approach of modern Christian theology, whether liberal or neo-orthodox, has been to cut off the relations between theological issues and the scientific or philosophical perspective from which objections have been launched. The approach characteristic of Muslim traditions, on the other hand, has been an attempt at .synthesis through interpretation

Christian theologians have sought to assert their orthodoxy by claiming that their doctrine of a personal deity is more faithful to the Biblical picture of God than the abstract deity of medieval theologians. Perhaps, however, the tendency to .personalize the deity was always latent in the Christian doctrine of the incarnation

Muslim theologians, on the other hand, have found ample support for their claims to orthodoxy in the Qur'an and ahadith. Those Muslim thinkers who have found

fault with philosophical theology have argued against the interpretations offered by the theologians and philosophers, but rather than offering an alternative theology, .they for the most part have abandoned theology altogether

The sort of philosophical theology one finds in the works of 'Allamah Tabataba'i is one in which God is not understood as being personal, in the sense that it is held that terms which are normally attributed to persons must be reinterpreted when they are applied to God because of the fundamental ontological disparity between the Creator .and His creation

Consider, for example, 'Allamah's philosophical discussion of the speech of Allah (in the commentary to ۲:۲۵۳-۲۵۴). 'Allamah writes that the Knowledge of Allah is 'ilm al-huduri, that is, knowledge by presence. Knowledge by presence is defined as a non-conceptual, non-representational knowledge in which the known object is directly .present to the knower

This sort of knowledge gained an important place in Islamic philosophy with the works

of Sohravardi, and was further elaborated by Mulla Sadra. Examples given are of the knowledge one has of one's own consciousness and of those states that are considered causally dependent on consciousness, such as pain and hunger. In knowledge by presence, it is held that the knower, the knowledge and the known are .united

Allamah criticizes both the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites for implicitly attributing to' Allah 'ilm al-husuli, knowledge which is acquired when ideas are produced in the mind. There is an ontological distinction between the kinds of knowledge to be attributed to

men and to God and this distinction is based on the ontological distinction between .persons and God

Another distinction in Islamic theology to which 'Allamah appeals, in order to explain the knowledge of God, is between detailed knowledge ('ilm al-tafsili) and summary knowledge ('ilm al-ijmali). A subject has detailed knowledge when he is aware of the specifics of and object, as, for example, when he entertains specific propositions .descriptive of what is known

A subject has summary knowledge when he does not entertain specific propositions about the object of knowledge, but he is able to provide specific information under the appropriate conditions. The distinction is roughly equivalent to that between occurrent and dispositional doxastic states discussed in contemporary Western .philosophy

Allamah writes that since God is simple pure existence and is not devoid of any' perfection, all the details of creation exist in God in their highest forms without distinction, "Hence they are known by Him with summary knowledge which is at once (capable of detailed disclosure."(۱

Contemporary Western philosophical theology has been grappling for a number of years with the problem of how God can have knowledge of temporary truths, such as

that today is Saturday. The answer suggested by Islamic theology is that God's omniscience is different from human prepositional knowledge and must not be understood anthropomorphically to mean the occurrent entertainment of all true .propositions in the mind of God

All difference and change are to be understood in terms of limitations. We can attribute to God the

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Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i Biddyat al Hikmat: The Elements of ' -۱ Muslim Metaphysics, Part ۹, trans. 'Ali Quli Qara'i, Al-Tawhid, vol. XI, No. ۱-۲ .(Muharram -Jamad i II,۱۴۱۴/July -December ۱۹۹۴), p. ۱۷۱

knowledge that today is Saturday because He could reveal to someone that today is .Saturday, but God never entertains this proposition per se

Allamah writes that Allah (subhanah wa ta'ala) is too great to be attributed with a' mind with which He might perceive ideas and essences which are to be found in the imaginations of perceivers. Otherwise, He would become compound or composed and would be liable to transitory phases; and even His speech could be potentially .wrong

Far greater is He than what they attribute to Him! In other words, the glorification of God is seen as being more than worth the price of interpreting scriptural claims of divine knowledge in such a way that the emphasis is on the differences rather than .the similarities between divine knowledge and human knowledge

The divine mystery and transcendence is also asserted in the claim that God is not only not a person; He is not even a substance. Substances are taken to be composed of essence and existence and this implies limitation. God is unlimited, so He can have .no qualitative properties, no essence, and hence cannot be a substance

While 'Allamah emphasizes that speech and knowledge for man and for God are

metaphysically distinct, he answers the charge which would be raised by Alston that such a distinction renders such concepts as the knowledge and speech of God unintelligible. 'Allamah Tabataba'i goes to some trouble to distance himself from those who have held that the entire universe is the speech

.of God

Tabataba'i rejects this view because it would mean that any claim that God communicates to his prophets would have to be interpreted as mere allegory. On the contrary, Tabataba'i maintains that God's speech is real communication. Divine revelation is real communication because it is directed to specific individuals, and .because through revelation a message is conveyed

However, when it is said that God communicates His message to the prophets, this does not mean that He has thoughts, which are conveyed from one person to another. When God is said to communicate with a man, this means that He creates .something that gives that man an inner knowledge of a message

It becomes clear that the laws which can guarantee the happiness of human society cannot be perceived by reason. Since according to the thesis of general guidance running throughout creation the existence of an awareness of these laws in the human species is necessary, there must be another power of apprehension within the human species which enables man to understand the real duties of life and which .places this knowledge within the reach of everyone

This consciousness and power of perception, which is other than reason and sense, is called the prophetic consciousness, or the consciousness of revelation.(۱)

Allamah claims that although, we use the term 'communication' to signify the' exchange of ideas between human beings, the term can be used to describe "revelation" because the effect or function is the same, i.e., a message is obtained. In

Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, Shi'ite Islam, trans. Seyyed' -۱ .Hossein Nasr, (Houston: FILINC, ۱۹۷۹), p. ۱۴۳

like manner, we use the term 'lamp' to describe an electric light, even though it has .none of the elements of the lamps to which the term was first applied

Thus, revelation may be considered in a real sense to be God's communication to man, although this communication does not originate from a mind or a person.(۱) Thus Tabataba'i illustrates one means by which one may consistently hold that revelation is .divine communication without committing oneself to the view that God is a person

In so doing, 'Allamah also demonstrates how religious language may be given a rational interpretation without attributing to God the metaphysical limitations which .accord to man and other substances

The rationalism of Islamic theology is also exhibited in 'Allamah's discussions of other topics. In his discussion of miracles, for example, he asserts that miracles should not .be considered as violations of natural laws

He does not even require that miracles should have no natural explanation. If there were some theory by which all the alleged cases of miracles could be explained and .even predicted this would not detract from their miraculousness

What makes an event a miracle is merely that it should be out of the ordinary, good, and that it should be religiously significant in the posing of a challenge, e.g., .establishing the truth of a prophetic claim

In the tradition of transcendental wisdom from within which 'Allamah writes, God is pure existence itself. While this claim can also be found in Aquinas, it is more

Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, Al-Mizan, trans. Sayyid Saeed' -۱ .Akhtar Rizvi (Tehran: WOFIS, ۱۹۸۲), vol. ۴, p. ۱۳۳-۴۲

fully developed in the transcendental wisdom than it is in Thomism, for it is in this

fully developed in the transcendental wisdom than it is in Thomism, for it is in this identification of divinity and the reality of being that transcendental wisdom is linked to Islamic mysticism, and it is here that we may find the answer to the second sort of objection raised by modern Christian theology to the sort of theology advanced by .'Allamah

Many Christian theologians and philosophers have claimed that God must be understood to be personal because the alternative is to consider Him as impersonal, as an It instead of a He. This dichotomy informs much of Christian theology and Western religious studies, and yet it is a dichotomy that has no place in Islamic .thought

The distinction between personal and non-personal conceptions of deity is very important in the philosophy of mysticism, especially since R. C. Zaehner proposed a basic dichotomy between theistic and monistic mystical experiences.(۱) Those who favor the personal view of God claim that in order for God to be a proper object of worship, He must be something to which the worshipper can relate personally as .loving

The idea of God as pure existence is seen as one that makes God into a cold and static abstraction, a

sort of cipher. The mercy of God is described by 'Allamah as God's causal power. A thing is called merciful because it bestows that which is needed by another. Since God provides all things, He is merciful. The persona list theologian will object that to offer this sort of

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۱- R. C. Zaehner, Mysticism: Sacred and Profane (New York: Oxford University Press, .(۱۹۶۱

.impersonalistic analysis of divine mercy is to deprive it of warmth and empathy

The response to this sort of criticism is that the persona list confuses the poetic and

the philosophical approaches to the Real. The fact that an impersonalistic theology is favored by reason in no way detracts from the appropriateness of a persona list .poetic response to the Real in worship

There is a famous story in the Mathnavi of Rumi about a shepherd who is heard by Moses praying to God in extremely anthropomorphic terms, saying that he wants to serve the Lord by picking the lice from His hair and such things. Moses rebukes the shepherd and in turn Moses is rebuked by God for interfering with the sincere worship .of the shepherd

The criticism of persona list theology to more abstract philosophical theologies springs from the same sort of mistake, but in the other direction. It is as if the .shepherd were to find fault with the Mosaic conception of God

While 'Allamah defends a very strongly rationalist and impersonalistic theology, this does not prevent him from using the shepherd's imagery in his worship and in his imaginative relation to the divine, as is evidenced in his own spiritual writings, such as :the following poem

I Alone was Captured

.The valorous heart and its religion have been captured by love of beauties

.They were not captured by a rook, they were rooked by a pretty face

.Do not imagine that Majnun became mad of his own will

He was caught

.and hauled in from the bottom of the sea up to the heavens by Layld

I did not find my way to the source of the sun by myself. I was a mote, and your love .raised me

I am just some scum washed away in the flood. As it was passing it carried me off to .the heart of the sea

Where was the goblet of red wine? From whose hand was it poured at this banquet to ?capture the pining heart

It was the curve of your eyebrow and the palm of your heavenly hand that in a single .disclosure-all at once-captured me

From you yourself have I learned love, and by you am I burned. With your blushing .cheeks you have unsettled me

My friends and I were at the head of your lane, but Your sad face saw me, and I alone .was captured

We had all fallen in love and were anxious lest your sadness leave us all behind, but I .alone was captured

The anthropomorphic imagery found in 'Allamah's poetry in no way conflicts with the abstract conception of divinity found in his philosophical theology, because it is clear that each has its own place. The relation between these two realms is maintained by .the possibility of rational interpretation and imaginative expression

Mystical poetry may be seen as the imaginative expression of that which is given the form of rational interpretation in philosophical theology. The religious moment is not to be characterized as monistic or personal, but

p: ۱۲۹

as personal in its imaginative expression and non-personal in its rational .interpretation

Islamic Law And Muslim Life

Islamic law or shari'ah performs various functions, and these functions have altered over the centuries. Even within a given time period, the shari'ah plays different roles

for different Muslim communities. Throughout the middle ages, the shari'ah functioned not only to prescribe ritual orthopraxy, but it also functioned as penal code, commercial law, and as a kind of international law among Muslim countries.

The jurisdiction of the civil law of Islam was often challenged by another law: the law of the courts of the caliphs, amirs and sultans. In addition to the qadis, who administered and judged according to the shari'ah, the caliphs also had lawyers concerned with nonreligious law by which many of the punishments were handled and taxes levied.(۱)

Nevertheless, Islamic law held precedence in these areas. If the ruler imposed some law or issued a decree which was blatantly in violation of the shari'ah he would have to face the opposition of the ulama, and the support they commanded. Another overlapping of jurisdiction could be found in common law and Islamic law.

Islamic law often explicitly condones 'urf or custom, and one of the questions which the Muslim legal scholars have debated is whether the references to custom should be taken to refer specifically to the custom at the time of the Prophets, or more generally to whatever customs are current in society.

With the eclipse of the caliphates and the intrusion of colonial

p: ۱۳۰

۱- See Annemarie Schimmel, Deciphering the Signs of God (Albany: SUNY Press, ۱۹۹۴), p. ۲۰۷-۲۰۸.

powers into Muslim lands and the subsequent emergence of Muslim nation states, the shari'ah came to be increasingly restricted. Pious Muslims reacted in several ways. Some, like the Egyptian theologian Muhammad 'Abduh (d.۱۹۰۵), who are called modernists, admitted that the way in which Islamic law had come to be interpreted needed revision in order to accommodate the demands of modern life.

Others sought the implementation of Islamic law as traditionally understood but

within the context of the modern nation state. Both the conservatives and reformists were in agreement, however, that the displacement of Islamic law by the colonialists and secularists had to be reversed.

The conviction that Islamic law, either in a reformed guise or in its traditional regalia, can and must be implemented in modern Muslim societies is the single unifying feature of the Islamic movement that developed in the post colonialist period, championed by such diverse leaders as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. ۱۸۹۶), Mawlana Mawdidi (d. ۱۹۷۹), Iasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, to mention just a few.

The call for the implementation of the shari'ah has served to rally Muslims ever since into a revivalist movement pejoratively termed "fundamentalist" by the Western press.(۱)

Opposed to the revivalists are those who hold that beyond the realm of the rituals of worship, Islamic law is outmoded, an anachronism which has outlived its usefulness, an obstacle to "progress and development."

It is this attitude which was most vehemently implemented in Kemal Ataturk's rule in Turkey (۱۹۲۳-۱۹۳۸), but which has advocates among those

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۱- The term "revivalist" was suggested by Ali Abadi, an Iranian sociologist whose work on Islam and modernisms being written in New York.

who claim to be defenders of Islam, as well. The Islamic opponents of revivalism emphasize the personal, inward dimensions of Islam, and hold that the only proper function of the shari'ah in modern society is the delineation of ritual law.

International law is to be legislated, they hold, in the United Nations; commercial law must be subject to the pressures of international economics; penal codes are to reflect the "enlightened" moral sensibilities of groups like Amnesty International, the framers of declarations of human rights, or even the American Civil Liberties Union.

Other areas of law are more controversial. Family law, for example, was one of branches of law which the colonialists were prepared to concede to traditional Muslim jurisprudence, fiqh, and some Muslim opponents of revivalism would allow family law .to continue to be governed by the shari'ah

Regardless of one's stance toward the issues mentioned above, there is no denying that these issues are the most controversial in contemporary Muslim societies. Emerging from this controversy there is a new function being performed by the shari'ah, for perhaps more than ever before, one's concept of oneself as a Muslim and what one takes it to mean to be a Muslim are intertwined with one's understanding .and attitude toward Islamic law

In Islam, the position of man and his responsibilities to God and other men are determined by the law rather than by theology per se. There are two essential .questions debated in this regard, one of scope and one of content

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The question of scope is the question of the areas over which Islamic law is taken to .have jurisdiction

Is it to be relegated to the personal aspects of ritual observance, or is it to be the law of the land, governing commerce, international relations and the criminal justice system? The question of content is the question of what the law of Islam actually prescribes. Is the shari'ah that which was formulated by the medieval jurists, or is the interpretation of Islamic law by contemporary reformers to be accepted as being in ?closest conformity to the command of Allah

The questions of scope and content are often confused because would-be reformers sometimes give an interpretation of Islamic law that seems to differ very little from currently accepted secular law. While they affirm the need to implement Islamic law, the vision of Islamic law of which they approve is closer to European civil law than to .the formulations of Islamic law developed by the fuqaha

If such is one's understanding of Islamic law, the difference between the implementation of a reformed Islamic law and the replacement of Islamic law by civil law would be purely theoretical. Of course, not all programs for the reformation of the understanding of Islamic law are to be dismissed as poorly disguised attempts to .replace Islamic law by European law

There are criticisms of past interpretations of the law which arise even from within the ranks of the traditionally trained 'ulama. Shahid Baqir Sadr, may Allah

have mercy on him, for example, suggests a number of innovations to the understanding of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (uwul al-fiqh) that have become quite influential among contemporary Shi'i jurists, but which by no means .compromise with European sensibilities

Imam Khomeini, may his spirit be sanctified, also introduced a number of reforms to .the understanding of Islamic law, most famously, regarding Islamic government

The usual categorizations of Muslim thinkers into fundamentalist, modernist and occasionally, traditionalist, are misleading. A more useful approach to classification would attend to the position taken on the scope of Islamic law and the extent and kind .of reform advocated within the scope that law is recognized to have

In Iran, for example, there was at one time an organization called Anjoman lujjatiyah, which advocated strict observance to medieval formulations of ritual law and abstention from political affairs until the reappearance of the twelfth Imam (may Allah hasten his manifestation). This group would allow a very restricted scope to Islamic law during the present period of the Major Occultation of the Present Imam, but within what they took to be the scope of Islamic law, ritual practice, little need for .reform was seen

Some contemporary Muslim intellectuals hold a similar position, advocating a Western style of liberalism in politics, but personal devotion in accordance with traditional

practice. Those who want to see something comparable to the Protestant Revolt in the context of Islam promote such intellectual movements as opening the way for a Protestant Islam compatible with

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.the secularism which dominates the Western world

On the other hand, there are those who, like Dr. 'Ali Shari'ati, champion the breadth of the scope of Islam, but who interpret this much differently than do those trained in .(the Islamic seminaries (hawzah

Shari'ati's vision would allow a comprehensive scope for Islamic law, but only after it had become "reformed" in accordance with the sort of ideology for which he became popular. This ideological reform of the law would have had severe consequences, had it ever been formulated, for Shari'ati had sympathy for neither the traditional approaches to fiqh nor for such formulations of devotion as may be found in the .famous Shi'i prayer book, Mafati al-Jinan

Then again, if we turn to Mawdidi, we find that he grants a comprehensive scope to Islamic law, although he would interpret it in such a way as to accommodate the exigencies of the modern nation state, modeled, as far as possible, on the Prophet's .Madinah

Those who would limit the scope of Islamic law offer several arguments for their position. Some, like the Anjoman lujjatiyah, argue on theological grounds that Islam cannot have wide scope in the time of the Major Occultation. It is the refutation of this argument that is the focus of much of Imam Khomeini's work on Islamic Government, .lukumat Islamiyyah

Dr. Shari'ati also argued vehemently against this kind of quietism which he described as being characteristic of the murja'iyyah, early Muslims who responded to the difficulties of the Muslim community following

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the death of the Prophets by retiring to the mosques and occupying themselves with .prayer

Some pseudo-sufis, mutasawwifin, claim that political affairs are ignoble and that one who would tread the spiritual path should abstain from politics. In response, it should first be noted that this is a distortion of the spiritual way of Islam, whether known as tasawwuf or 'irfan. The salik, one who treads the path toward God, is not to abstain from politics as such, but from the deception and corruption which foul so much of the political arena today; and furthermore, the salik must not use any claim to spiritual .station or rank in order to advance his political aspirations

The functions of government, like those of household economics, are subject to the shari'ah, while the province of 'irfan is spiritual wayfaring. One is not to advance political claims on the basis of 'irfan, no more than the 'arif can advance any other claim having to do with the outward elements of Islam on the basis of mysticism (although, of course, if the 'arif happens to be a faqih as well, he may well issue legal decisions as do the other fuqaha but this would be on the basis of his expertise in fiqh .(and not on the basis of his 'irfan

Indeed, according to the greatest 'urafa and sufis, adherence to the shari'ah has always been an unquestionable standard, as was expressed in the slogan, "No tariqah without shari'ah." The higher is not to be put

into the service of the lower, but rather all the aspects of life, no matter how worldly, .are to be sanctified by their being put at the service of the divine

Unless the shari'ah is given wide scope, the context for the development of the deeper sanctification of life sought by the sufi will be missing. Secondly, even if, for whatever reason, one deems it unsuitable to engage in political affairs, this does not mean that religious law has no bearing on them, just as one's decision not to become a butcher does not mean that religious law has no bearing on that profession. The bearing of the shari'ah on politics is a question of fiqh and as such must be determined

.by those with expertise in that field, the fuqaha

Another argument begins with the fact of divergence of opinion about the law. Since there is no universal agreement about the proper interpretation of the law, it is argued that the law must be enacted by a democratically elected legislature. The conclusion of this argument does not follow from the premise. To argue this way is like claiming that since there is no universal agreement about the laws of physics, .they should be legislated

The law of God can no more be legislated than the laws of physics. Disagreements about the content of the law, like disagreements about the laws of physics, are to be resolved through investigation, although while investigation into the laws of physics makes use of

experimental evidence, investigation into the laws of Islam requires historical and textual evidence, and it is this which constitutes the research for which the 'ulama are .trained

Unfortunately, there are many today, even in the Muslim world, which has become so enamored with Western science that they imagine it to be built on a solid foundation of experimental evidence independent of philosophical thought. However, it is a rare point of nearly universal consensus in the philosophy of science since the decline of positivism that experimental evidence is not a sufficient standard for the evaluation of .competing theoretical claims

This does not imply, however, that one view is as good as any other, for although the differences among theoretical physicists are certainly more divergent than those to be found among the mujtahids, in both cases the resolution of differences requires research, analysis and critical argumentation about the significance of various findings and claims to explanatory strength and comprehension. To engage in this sort of argumentation and research about Islamic law is precisely what it means to be .a mujtahid

Sometimes an appeal is made to claims found in the traditions of Western hermeneutics and literary theory to the effect that every text is open to multiple interpretations, and on this basis it is argued that the reading of the Qur'an and ahadith given by the ulama represents only one way of dealing with the text, which .can mean other things to other people

This much is not very controversial, but from

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this it is concluded that one reading of the texts is as good as another and that a democratic approach should be taken to the understanding of scripture. The .conclusion is preposterous

Should a vote be taken on the meaning of controversial passages? The fact of the multiple meanings that can be given to sacred texts is not something which had to be learned from Western literary theorists anyway, for one of the most salient features of the Islamic tradition is the way in which various levels of meaning have been .posited for its texts

The fact that texts can be interpreted in different ways does not mean that the texts .cannot serve as a solid foundation for a comprehensive system of law

The absurdity of Islamic Protestantism becomes even clearer when one considers the nature of the Protestant Reformation in Christianity and the relevant differences between Christianity and Islam. The Christian Protestants were protesting against the claim made by the Church that it was the sole vehicle to God because only its priests .could perform certain sacraments by which one could acquire grace

To the contrary, the Protestants claimed that the Holy Spirit could fill anyone with grace often manifested in ecstatic states, and they emphasized the direct relation to God by having the scriptures translated into vernacular languages. Opposing the Catholic emphasis on the sacraments, Luther proclaimed that by faith alone shall man be saved. In Islam, however, the ulama are not priests; their authority does not stem

from

.permission to perform sacraments, but from knowledge of the law

Grace is not obtained in Islam by partaking in the sacraments, but by submitting entirely to Allah in faith and works, which are repeatedly mentioned together in the :Qur'an

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

!By the time

Surely man is lost

Except those who believe and do good

and enjoin each other to the truth

.and enjoin each other to patience

(Surah ۱۰۳)

Hence, the grounds for protest that existed in Christianity at the time of the Reformation simply do not exist in Islam. The Christian Protestants challenged the authority of the Church with the claim that the grace that comes from the sacraments could be achieved by a direct personal relation with God without the need of priestly .intermediaries

The rites performed by Muslims, on the other hand, do not involve any priesthood. Individuals perform the five daily prayers, the fast of ramadhan, the hajj, zakah and the bearing witness without need for the clergy. The function of the ulama in these as in all religious affairs is to specify the law, that is, to explain how to perform the .prayers, Hajj, etc

So, the would-be Islamic Protestants cannot muster the rationale which is to be found

behind the Protestant revolt. They cannot argue that the ulama are unnecessary for a direct relation with God or for the performance of sacraments because Islam has a .anomic rather than a sacramental orientation

As for ecstatic states and the grace that come from

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direct encounter with the divine, the Christian Protestants thought this could be achieved by simply allowing oneself to be "filled with the Spirit", while in Islam, the sufis built their own sacramental hierarchy and discipline for union with the Beloved in (what Ernest Gellner has described as a "reformation in reverse".(۱)

There could be a sort of Islamic Protestantism directed against tasawwuf, and Mu۱ammad Iqbal's (d. ۱۹۳۸) objections to "plr worship" on the Indian subcontinent might be compared to Protestant objections to "Papism", but this would have no .bearing on commonplace Islamic piety and its focus on the shari'ah

Islamic and Christian Protestantism are similar only in that both would limit the sacred realm to expand the secular. So, we should ask why this happened in Christian Protestantism and whether something similar would be appropriate in an Islamic .setting

There are two major reasons for the rise of secularism following the Protestant Reformation, one theoretical and one practical. The theoretical reason is the emphasis on faith as opposed to works already mentioned. As religion became .increasingly personal, the public realm became secular

In Islam, the same sort of communal personal split does not occur because an emphasis on iman (faith) is not seen as something in contrast to an emphasis on works, but as an attempt to go beyond the requirements of the law with attendant .supererogatory deeds, which are also defined by the law

.In short, there is no getting around the importance of the law by championing faith

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Ernest Gellner, "Doctor and Saint", in Nikkie Keddie,ed., Scholars, Saints and Sufis, -۱
.(Berkeley: University of California Press, ۱۹۷۲), p.۳۰۷-۳۲۶; cited in Schimmel, ibid., p. ۲۱۲

The practical reason for the rise of secularism was the proliferation of Protestant sects. As the power of the Church declined, there was no single Protestant alternative, although on a local level some were able to acquire political might, as in Calvin's .Switzerland and Anglican England

The immediate result of the power vacuum was religious war, and religious Christians largely accepted liberal secularism after the Reformation as a way to avoid continual warfare. Once again, there is no counterpart in Islam, and again, this is because of the .centrality of the law

Wars among Muslims have typically been fought because of differences regarding the question of who should administer the law, while differences over the question of .what law was to be administered were relatively minor

The very thought that the scope of the shari'ah should be restricted was inconceivable until the British attempted to supplant the law of God by the law of the crown in the Muslim lands which had come under their imperial control. In any case, neither the theoretical nor the practical reasons for the rise of liberal secularism apply .in the case of Islam, whether in Iran, Algeria, the Sudan or any other Muslim country

The next argument of the Islamic Protestants is a direct challenge to the training of the 'ulama. It is claimed that since the 'ulama are not trained in the modern physical and social sciences, they are not qualified to issue rulings in such specialized areas as government or economic policy. Once

.again, the premises are not sufficient to establish the conclusion of this argument

The fact that an 'alim is not trained in contemporary economics does not detract in

the least from his religious ruling that riba is haram. On the other hand, such questions as whether the contemporary banking system in a particular country in infected by riba, whether any form of interest is riba and the like require familiarity with .contemporary economics

The situation is rather like that of a chemist who knows that an explosive reaction will result from the mixture of two chemicals. If he does not know what chemicals are present in two different containers, he will not be able to determine whether they can .be safely combined

This does not mean that his knowledge of chemical theory is in any way lacking, but that the application of chemical theory in a particular instance may require consultation with those who have knowledge of the particular circumstances in .question

Similarly, those who seek to implement the shari'ah in modern Muslim societies rely upon the expertise of those with training in the various fields to which the shari'ah is to be applied, often appointing Western trained experts in high administrative positions concerned with banking and commerce, for example: What is needed here, if the implementation of the shari'ah is to be successful, is a genuine cooperation .between the experts and the ulama

The danger is not the unlikely prospect that modern societies will return to the practices of

the Middle Ages, as so many Western reporters imagine and the Islamic Protestants allege, rather the danger is that the real work of trying to implement Islamic law will .be abandoned in deference to the opinions of the technocrats

The argument becomes deeper, however, with the claim that all knowledge is interrelated, and that the lack of familiarity on the part of the ulama with contemporary sciences distorts their knowledge of fiqh itself. The problem with this

claim is that its exponents fail to appreciate the full implications of their claim of .mutual interrelatedness

For if all knowledge is truly interrelated, then social scientists could just as well be condemned for their lack of familiarity with the traditional Islamic sciences.(۱) And indeed, a number of Muslim thinkers have called for the Islamization of the sciences .which they hold to have been corrupted by disbelief, kufr

The doctrine of epistemological holism, that all branches of knowledge are interrelated, does not actually fit well with the views of those who would limit the shari'ah to ritual practices, for if all forms of knowledge are truly interrelated, there will be no basis on which to limit the relevance of the knowledge of the ulama to the .details of worship

One of the most frequently voiced arguments for a restriction of the scope of Islamic law is the rationalist argument that God has endowed man with reason in order that he may solve the problems of life on his own, and that to seek the solution

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۱ - I owe this argument to Dr. Sa'id Zibakalam, of the Faculty of the History and .Philosophy of Science at the Institute for Cultural Studies and Research, Tehran

.to all life's problems in religious injunctions is thus itself to violate the will of God

In response it is to be observed that it is no disparagement of reason to hold that God would provide reason with guidance in the form of a law revealed through His prophets. The acceptance and submission to divine guidance in the form of a sacred .law in no way diminishes the need for the exercise of reason

Islam should not be seen as a simple solution to all life's problems, but as an orientation toward those problems, an orientation which requires the attempt to live in accordance with the will of Allah, and which itself raises its own practical and .intellectual problems

The understanding of the divine law itself and how to implement it will still require the employment of reason, but the reason celebrated in Islam is not the merely instrumental faculty discussed by Hume and those who have followed him in Western philosophy, but a divinely enlightened faculty which by its very nature conforms to the commands of Allah.(۱)

Reason itself is not a neutral observer here, for our understanding of the nature of reason itself depends upon the traditions from within which reason is employed and itself observed.

Once again, the issues of scope and content must be distinguished. One may well argue for reform in the application of the shari'ah on the grounds that relevant information has become available that should be taken into consideration when issuing legal rulings, but this is

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۱ - See Usul al-Kdfl, Book I, on 'aql, in which the creation of the intellect and its complete obedience to Allah are described in a report attributed to the Imams.

to remain within the mainstream of revivalist Muslim thought, and not to stray into the offshoots of thought that would deny the jurisdiction of Islamic law in various important realms of Muslim life.

Regardless of the difficulties applying the shari'ah in the context of modern life, the comprehensive character of its scope is essential. One reason for this has to do with the nature of Islam itself. To make progress in Islam is to bring oneself ever more completely into submission to Allah.

It is because of this understanding of piety that Muslims have always been so intensely interested in the commands of Allah, the divine law, the shari'ah. To the extent that a Muslim is God-fearing, muttaqi, he will attempt to bring all the aspects of his life into conformity with the will of Allah.

Those who ridicule the comprehensive quality of the divine law object that there is no such thing as Islamic sports, Islamic engineering, Islamic mathematics, etc. But even where the divine law allows for freedom of thought and action, the freedom allowed is not the freedom of autonomy, an independence where the self dominates, but rather .it is an oriented freedom, a freedom to find one's own way toward the divine light

This freedom operates within the liberating constraints of the shari'ah. Sports are to take place with their own Islamic 'adab, there must be fair play and no gambling. Engineering and mathematics, as well, are considered to be neutral activities (mubah) by the law, although they

are to be undertaken in conformity with the law, without any violation of contracts or .usurpation of the rights of others

One of the chief sources of confusion in this area has to do with the label "Islamic". By the "Islamic sciences" is often meant those sciences that developed within the context of medieval Islamic cultures. But the term "unislamic" is used for that which is .in violation of the shari'ah

This leads to the mistaken impression that there is something wrong from the point of view of Islamic law with the sciences which have developed in the West. Students of these modern sciences are then attracted to the view that their fields of study fall .outside of the scope of the shari'ah, which should be restricted to matters of worship

Unfortunately, this confusion is augmented by the fact that some who would defend the Islamic character of the traditional sciences are willing to foster the impression .that it is only these sciences which truly conform to Islamic law

Perhaps one way out of this confusion is to distinguish between islam, iman and ihsan, submission, faith and goodness. In all of the pursuits of the Muslim, these three should be kept in mind. At a minimum the Muslim should see to it that his activities do .not violate the law, that the shari'ah is heeded

But furthermore, the Muslim should also be a mu'min and attempt to let his deeds be an expression of his faith, and thus by putting his

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faith into practice to be muhsin. Such attempts were made during the classical period of the development of the so-called Islamic sciences, so that these sciences were integrated into an overarching world-view in which natural science, mathematics, grammar, religion and philosophy were brought into harmony.

The resultant system is exemplary, but this does not mean that it maintains its credibility, or still less, that anything contrary to it is in violation of Islam. Today, there is a need to become engaged in pursuits in fields as diverse as politics and physics, aspects of which are completely foreign to that with which the great Muslim scholars of the classical period were familiar.

This does not mean that such pursuits are in violation of the shari'ah, nor that the divine law has no jurisdiction over such pursuits, nor even that the work of the early Muslim scholars is completely irrelevant, for like those scholars, contemporary Muslim thinkers must also aspire to express their faith in all their pursuits, to make them good, true and beautiful, or, in a word, ahsan.(۱)

On Islam And Ethics

Various questions have been raised about the relationship between religion and ethics, and more specifically, about Islam and ethics, to which this article is a response.(۲) These questions arise from the fact that both religion and ethics seem to have ascertain sort of autonomy or independence.

Because religion is established through divine revelation, it seems to some that moral considerations must be excluded from it. If the dictates of religion and moral conscience

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On ihsan see Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, The vision of Islam (New York: -۱ .Paragon House, ۱۹۹۴), ۲۶۵ff

The questions have been specifically raised by the editorial staff of the theological -۲ journal published in Qom,Naqd wa Nazar, in No. ۱۳ of which (۱۹۹۸) the substance of the .present article is published (in Persian) in question/answer format

coincide on various judgments, it would appear to be a happy coincidence, for where .there is conflict, religion claims absolute authority

On the other hand, moral conscience makes its own absolute claims, independent of religion. Where the judgments of moral conscience are clear and firm, if there is conflict with a religious teaching, the moral conscience demands that the religious teaching be rejected. For example, moral conscience demands us to reject any .religion that commands cannibalism

The apparent independence and absolute character of both religious and moral claims poses a difficulty for religious people. Religious people believe that they should be moral, and that this is pleasing to God, while they also must accept the absolute authority of revelation. In what follows a rough attempt is made to chart the .interpenetrating currents of religion and ethics

Religion" is a notoriously difficult term to define. There is a persistent controversy" among scholars about the roots of the Latin word, religion. From ancient times there were differences of opinion about the derivation of the word, and contemporary .scholars continue to express contrary opinions

Nevertheless, it seems that the fundamental meaning in Latin had to do with the turning of one's attention to matters of worship, being observant in the performance (of rituals as opposed to being negligent.(۱

At the same time, many Latin authors and subsequent writers have understood the word as signifying "binding" in the sense of being bound through religion to the gods or God, and although this etymology is

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See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion (San Francisco: - ۱ .Harper Row, ۱۹۷۸), ۲۰۴-۲۰۵

considered dubious by modern scholars, it has had considerable influence on the .understanding of the concept of religion in the West

If we turn to the Arabic word, din, we also find that there has been some controversy about its etymology. It was used at the time of the Prophet's (s) mission to signify submission to a law and a leader, and was contrasted with jahl, indicating lack of discipline and savagery. Sometimes the term din was used in contrast with dunya, where the latter signified a life of safety and comfort, so that din came to be associated with the courageous struggle under difficult conditions for the lofty aims of .(the Prophet (s)(۱

The Arabic word akhlaq is the plural of khulq and signifies the character traits of a person. It is related to khalq in the sense that the character traits of a person result .from the way that the person has been formed or molded

In contemporary usage, the word akhlaq is used to translate the English ethics. The English word ethics is ambiguous, since it is used both for that branch of philosophy that studies values, principles and virtues and for these values, principles and virtues themselves. Here, we shall be primarily concerned with ethics in the sense of morals .or akhlaq

Among medieval Muslim scholars, the subject called 'ilm al-akhlaq consisted mainly of classifications and discussions of the virtues and vices in a manner influenced by Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics, but containing much original reflection in

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See M. M. Bravmann, The Spiritual Background of Early Islam (Leiden: Brill, ۱۹۷۲), ۳۴- -۱ .۳۶

.the light of the Qur'an and ahadith

Our concern is somewhat broader, for it is concerned with moral principles, rules, values and aims, in addition to virtues, and the contemporary Persian use of the word akhlaq often includes discussions of these topics, although the Persian word continues to be used in some contexts in the more restricted sense pertaining to .traits

By reviewing, even this briefly, the etymologies of ethics and religion, several points of contact stand out. The submission to law and leader and the courage to engage in .jihad consequent to this submission require noble character traits

Religion demands ethics, and the ethical values of pre-Islamic society were such as to admit to the ethical value of the acceptance of religion, although the moral demands .of Islam go far beyond the ethical norms of the jahiliyyah

These considerations provide a good introduction to the complexities of the relation between religion and ethics. On the one hand, all religions seem to have some moral teachings. They inform their followers about what is right and wrong, hold up paragons of virtue, and declare what is to be valued and what is to be held as vain. On .the other hand, religious ethical teachings do not fill a moral vacuum

Instead, they appeal to the moral conscience of those to whom they are addressed. Thus, religions both partially confirm and rectify morals. Numerous examples of these two features can be found in the prescriptions of the Qur'an. The Qur'an prescribes "enjoining the good" (amr

.bil-ma'ruf), which appeals to what is generally known to be good

It also informs us that some things are to be avoided, such as the use of intoxicants, .about which moral conscience does not offer a clear universal judgment

This relation of partial confirmation and reform is characteristic of the relation

between religion and many other areas. A similar dialectical relationship may be found between religion and politics, economics, history, anthropology and other fields. Reason itself stands in a similar dialectical relation to religion. It is both partially confirmed and rectified. Religion appeals to our rational and moral sensibilities at the .same time that it seeks to correct them

Because of the dual aspect of the relationship between religion and ethics, a dynamic process is generated in the believer. The believer is invited by religion to reflect .critically on his moral attitudes

In large part, our understanding of whom we are and our relations to others in community shapes our moral attitudes. So, the way in which religion comes to influence our ethics operates on several dimensions, for in addition to its direct appeal to and correction of our moral ideas, religion confirms and rectifies our understanding .of our selves and of our societies

Religion assumes that to some extent we know who we are,that we are aware of our needs and aspirations. Religion deepens and rectifies this understanding by teaching :that man is party to a primordial covenant with God

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِی آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ

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عَلَى□

أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ

□

قَالُوا بَلَى□

□

شَهِدْنَا

And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their" descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: Am I not your (Lord? They said: Yes! we bear witness." (٧:١٧٢

Furthermore, religion presents man with an ideal model or paragon of human existence in the perfect man, as exemplified in the lives of the prophets and imams (as). So, through the utilization of the two precious things (thaqalayn) left to us by the Prophet(s), namely, the Glorious Qur'an and his inerrant household (as), we may aspire to the anthropological knowledge that serves as one of the sources of the .moral perspective of Islam

Religion also assumes that to some extent we know how to organize ourselves into societies. Once again, the Glorious Qur'an and the inerrant Ahl al-Bayt of the .Prophet(s) partly confirm and partly rectify our social understanding

Our communities are not to be based solely on the need for the material advantages of social life; rather we are to build an ummah whose members are connected by the .fraternal ties of faith to win the pleasure of God

In order to understand something of the mutual influences of ethics and religion, it is important to see that in both cases, that of religious anthropology and religious sociology, a spiraling process of interactive moral and religious understanding is set up with the establishment of religion. In the case of sociology, our moral concepts

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are largely influenced, though not completely determined, by the nature of our .societies

As religion prescribes a certain reform and reorganization of our societies to conform to the divine law, the religiously informed social arrangements can be expected to give rise to an alteration in the moral concepts of those who are raised in them. These reformed moral concepts will then be employed in the attempt to bring society into

closer agreement with the moral demands of religion, society will be changed again, .and moral concepts will be further refined

The same sort of thing should happen with regard to anthropological understanding. When we understand ourselves as parties to a divine covenant, our moral concepts are altered. Through the process of the perfection of our moral concepts, we come to a better appreciation of the requirements of the divine covenant. The process is one .that endlessly leads us on through further refinements

Many people who read the Qur'an daily have noticed that no matter how many years they study it, they always find surprises. Perhaps the secret of this phenomenon is to be discovered in the changes the Qur'an produces in us. Since we are changed by our acquaintance with revelation, when we read it again, we find things that did not occur to us before. On the first reading, we did not yet have the capacity provided by its .completion

The same can be said for the other forms of worship and religious study. If we worship properly, it should

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change us. The change should affect our understanding of what worship is? The new understanding will affect our attitudes toward worship, and this will result in the ability .of worship to produce different changes in us, not least among them, moral changes

Changes in moral concepts are produced through the practice of religion because religion directs us toward God. As a result of this orientation, the believer finds that all the noble character traits belong truly to God, and only metaphorically to anything else. God’s most beautiful names often describe these noble traits of character.[۱] The acquisition of virtue then comes to be seen as the assumption (takhalluq) of the .character traits of God

The explanation sketched above of the mutual influences of moral understanding and religious understanding enable us to answer the ancient objection to the prophet(s)

attributed to the Brahmins and discussed by Muslim philosophers:(۲) if the moral teachings of the prophets are in agreement with reason, reason has no need of them; .but if their teachings conflict with reason, they should be rejected

The answer is to be found in understanding how reason may be in need of teachings that are in agreement with it. In all learning of rational matters, instruction is needed for the perfection of reason and for the appreciation of what accords with it. The moral instruction of religion takes the form of the successive stages of partial .confirmation and reform outlined above

The complex character of the mutual influences of religious and moral thought

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۱- Cf. William C. Chittick, Imaginal Worlds (Albany: State University of New York Press, ۱۹۹۴), ۴۰.

۲- Cf., Fazlur Rahman, "Barahima" in the New Edition of the Encyclopedia of Islam. A .version of the argument mentioned is attributed to Ibn Iazm and Shahrastani

brings out a further ambiguity in the use of the word ethics (akhlaq). We must be careful to be aware of when we are using the term for the values, principles and virtues that should ultimately result from the interactive encounter with religion, or an ideal ethics associated with the perfected man (insan kamil), and when we are using the term for the various values, principles and virtues and opinions about them that .happen to be instantiated in a given individual or culture, or mores

The fact that a moral rule exists in a given society does not imply that the rule has any .absolute authority

.From the point of view of ideal ethics, such a rule may even be perverse

The distinction between ideal ethics and mores may be of assistance in understanding the nature of secular ethics. When we ask whether secular ethics is possible, if what is .meant is ethics in the sense of mores, then the answer is obvious

At least on the social level, we cannot find a single instance of a community throughout human history that did not distinguish in some way between what its .members considered to be virtue and vice, good and bad, right and wrong

When we speak of secular ethics, we mean the ideals, values, moral principles and concepts of the virtues dominant in the secular societies of Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand as well as the former and currently communist nations. While no one can deny that ethics is

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to be found in all of these societies, in the secular liberal societies of the West, ethics .has become weakened

The weakness of secular ethics results from the fact that secular society is divided into personal and organizational realms. In the former values are arbitrary; in the latter they are given by the nature of the organization. In neither case are they open to rational dispute. The society is also divided politically between the proponents of limitless individual liberty and the proponents of collectivism, the champions of the .personal and the organizational realms of social life

When values are taken to be a matter of personal taste, there can be no rational argument about what values are correct. When values are a product of the structure of organizations whose aims (described in terms of profit and efficiency) cannot be .questioned, again rational investigation and moral inquiry are stifled

So, the dynamic process of partial confirmation and reform set up in religious ethics (described earlier) does not take place in secular societies, or takes place in very limited circumstances. Likewise, when values are limited to being either personal or .organizational, the motivation for spiritual wayfaring is weakened

It has no place in the organization, so it must be considered a leisure time activity (sargarmi). There is no intellectual groundwork in secular society to support the idea that virtue and moral insight are to be won only through the hard work of the

.purification of the soul

While it may be logically possible

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for an individual or society to stumble upon the ideal ethics through its own good sense, moral conscience and rational abilities, for the reasons mentioned above, this .is highly unlikely

Where ancient civilizations appear to have approximated to an understanding of ideal ethics despite the fact that they were unfamiliar with prophetic teachings, as in ancient Greece and ancient China, there was at least the idea that the right thing to do in a given set of circumstances was determined by the natural end of man and the law determined by reason, social harmony, or harmony with nature or the Tao, none of .which has any place in secular modern thought

Indeed, it is not very farfetched to suppose that some form of divine guidance was operative in these traditional cultures, even if not known as such. As we shall see below, Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani goes so far as to refer to the moral conscience as .an interior prophet

The existence of different mores in different cultures has given rise to the idea that ethics are relative to culture and that where there is a plurality of cultures or .subcultures; we should also expect and accept a plurality of moral visions

Yet religion seems to make absolute claims binding on all people, regardless of their nationality or culture. Religion seems to teach that there is only one ideal ethics, and ?that there can be no compromise with ethical relativism and ethical pluralism

In order to understand these issues, we need

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to get a clear understanding of what is meant by moral relativism and moral pluralism. Different writers define these terms in different ways. It would not be difficult to

define them in ways that are not compatible with religious teachings. It is much more interesting to investigate what forms of moral relativism and moral pluralism may be .compatible with religious teachings

Moral relativisms are often divided into three kinds: descriptive, epistemological and normative.(۱) Descriptive relativism is merely the claim that in different societies different moral codes are followed, different conceptions of the virtues are found, and .different ideals are valued

There is not much controversy about this, except for the question of the extent of the differences. Could there be two different societies for which there were no common elements of ethics at all? Does human nature or the nature of human social life necessitate some basic features of morality? Perhaps an argument could be made on the basis of the universal moral appeal of religion that there must be some common .features of moral conscience

Normative relativism is the claim that it is wrong to pass judgment about the morals of others. Normative relativism in its most extreme form is the claim that one should never pass judgment on the moral worth of anyone's actions, beliefs, character or .values

Although this extreme form of normative relativism is quite implausible, and very contemporary philosophers would be prepared to defend it, something like it seems to be fairly popular among many young

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۱- See the article "Moral Relativism" by David Wong in The Encyclopedia of Ethics.

people in the West, who often seem to make the mistake of thinking that it follows .from descriptive moral relativity

This normative relativism is a dangerous tendency, because it is easily turned into an excuse for neglecting the duty to oppose wrongdoing and injustice. The view is

logically self-defeating, because those who accept it consider it wrong for people to pass judgment on others, while considering something to be wrong is a form of passing judgment, and therefore, to be consistent, they should consider themselves .wrong

The most extreme form of a denial of normative relativism would hold that it is always proper to pass moral judgment on any group or individual's actions, beliefs, ideals or character. Religion appears to condemn this extreme position, because it holds that there are aspects of a person's moral life known only to himself and God upon which .moral worth depends

If both extreme positions about normative relativism are rejected, the correct position must lie somewhere between them. In other words, the correct position seems to be that it is appropriate to pass judgment on others in some circumstances but not in others. Exactly what criterion is to be used, if such a criterion can be formulated at all, is an issue that requires more discussion and reflection than it can .be given here

Epistemological forms of moral relativism hold that moral truths are relative to the epistemic states of agents, that is, that moral truths are relative to the ways people ,think, what they believe

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.and what they know. Sometimes this is confused with moral subjectivism

According to moral subjectivism, there is no objective moral reality that underlies claims to moral truth. This subjectivism may be individual or social. The subjectivist holds that what is right or good or virtuous is whatever the moral agent or society .believes to be so

While many epistemological relativists are subjectivists, one may reject subjectivism while affirming epistemological relativism. One may hold, for example, that good and bad are like right and left. What is to the right depends upon one's position, but given

one's position it is an objective fact that an object is to one's right. Whether the object is to the right or left is in no way dependent upon whether one believes the object to .be to the right or left

Likewise, the religious believer may hold that there are differences in the moral laws taught by different prophets (as) to their communities, so that what is right or wrong is relative to one's being under the command of a particular Prophet(s), and being .under such command, in turn, may be taken to depend upon one's epistemic state

However, this does not mean that for anyone who believes that they should follow the law of Abraham (as), it is correct for them to do so. When the law brought by one prophet is superseded by the law brought by the next prophet of God (as), it becomes obligatory to follow the superseding law. So, here is an

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interesting type of epistemological moral relativism that seems to be more than .compatible with religious belief

A neat logical proof demonstrates another respect in which religious belief is compatible with a form of epistemological relativism that pertains to the importance of intention, niyyah. The intention of an agent is an epistemic state. Whether an action is right or wrong for an agent to perform depends upon the agent's intention, .according to religious principles

Hence, according to religious principles, whether an action is right or wrong for an agent to perform depends upon his epistemic state, and this is the definition of epistemic relativism. What is interesting about this aspect of moral relativism is that it is also compatible with a form of moral absolutism, for one might hold that variance in intention in a given situation can only be sufficient to change the judgment applied to an action if the variance is due to relevant mistaken beliefs or other moral failures. In that case, an action could be considered absolutely right or wrong under the assumption that the agent who performed it held no mistaken beliefs relative to the .action

There are many other varieties of epistemological moral relativism and related positions about which interesting questions may be raised with regard to their .compatibility with religious teachings, but it would take several pages to discuss them

The important thing is to be aware of the differences. There are too many writers who confuse issues by making views associated with Protagoras the measure

of all relativisms.(۱) While there are many philosophers who defend some version of epistemological moral relativism, I do not know of any philosopher today who would claim that the proposition that x is good is equivalent to the proposition x is believed to .be good

One of the most common fallacies that occur in discussions of relativism is the confusion of the different types of relativism. The mistake occurs on the part of both those who attack and those who defend some sort of relativism. Conclusions reached on the basis of arguments pertaining to one form of relativism are illegitimately .applied to others

Aside from the differences among the positions mentioned, relativisms may be divided according to the parties to which the thesis of moral relativity is applied. The truth of moral claims may be held to depend upon the beliefs and attitudes of groups or individuals, or the beliefs and attitudes of groups fulfilling various conditions or .certain classes of individuals

For example, it is sometimes held that moral truths are dependent upon moral standards realized in moral language by those who use the language. According to this sort of opinion, the epistemic states of individuals are not sufficient to determine .moral truth until those individuals organize themselves into a linguistic community

It is not uncommon to find religious people who hold some version of moral relativism restricted to a specific individual or group of individuals. For example, some hold that what is right is whatever is pleasing to mawla

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Protagoras was the ancient Greed sophist who is infamous for his assertion, "Man -۱ ".is the measure of all things

.(as)

This need not be a form of relativism, for it only states that what is right is to be measured by what is pleasing to mawla; but a form of relativism takes shape when it .is held that rightness is dependent on being pleasing to mawla

Many mistakes in philosophy occur because of confusion between the way of knowing that something is so and what it is that makes something so. This example also indicates that much depends upon the relation between the relevant epistemic states and the moral evaluation in question. One might hold a form of relativism in which epistemic states do not completely determine what is right and wrong, but in which .they have significant influence in the matter

Another variable according to which types of relativism may be distinguished pertains to the types of moral truth claimed to be relative to epistemic states. For example, the Ash'arites is notorious for their divine subjectivism in ethics according to which moral .judgments are entirely dependent on the will of God

Such views are called divine command theories of ethics. Robert M. Adams holds a divine command theory of a more restrictive sort. He claims that moral statements about what ought to be done depend on the divine will, but that moral judgments .about what is good and just are not dependent on the divine will

The force of the moral ought, according to Adams, stems from the fact that it (indicates the command of a good and just God.(۱

Robert Adams: "Must God Create the Best?" Philosophical Review, ۸۱, ۳ (۱۹۷۲), ۳۱۷- -۱ ۳۳۲, reprinted in Thomas Morris, ed., The Concept of God (New York: Oxford University

P۱۹۸۷), ۹۱-۱۰۶; "A Modified Divine Command Theory of Ethical Wrongness" in Religion and Morality: A Collection of Essaysed. Gene Outka and John P. Reeder, (New York: Doubleday, ۱۹۷۳); "Divine Command Metaethics Modified Again" The Journal of .(Religious Ethics, ۷, ۱ (۱۹۷۹

The importance of this sort of view as a form of relativism is brought out by considering the fact that while a good and just God would not command just anything, .there may be some latitude with regard to what He could command

Maybe the independent moral facts of the matter are not sufficient to determine everything needed for a moral code, so God fills in the gaps needed for an effective morality through divine fiat. Since God is just, He could not have commanded lying, but maybe He could have commanded the use of the toothbrush, or forbidden .marriage to the child of one's uncle or aunt

The points and examples indicated above indicate the extent to which there can be a wide variety of types of epistemological moral relativism, which may or may not be related to a more general position of epistemological relativism in areas other than .ethics

One may hold that some moral truths are absolute and others relative to the epistemic states of creatures or to the divine will. The nature of the dependence of moral truths to epistemic states may vary from complete determination to some weaker form of influence. Some moral truths may be relative in different ways to the epistemic states of different individuals or groups. It may well be that moral truth .turns out to be a quite complex matter

Before leaving the topic of moral relativism, it is worth discussing a very popular argument for relativism. It is often pointed out

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that there is no neutral standpoint from which to evaluate competing claims to moral .truth

Often this claim is made about all truths, whether moral or not. From the alleged fact that all methods of evaluation are subjectively biased, it is fallaciously inferred that there is no objective truth about morality and that all moral propositions depend for .their truth on the epistemic states of those who evaluate them

This sort of argument is invalid because it does not follow from the fact that reality can only be viewed from a subjective perspective that reality lacks objectivity. The in .eliminability of subjectivity does not imply that all subjectivities are equally reliable

Likewise, no claim about length can be evaluated without measurement. This does not imply that length depends on measurement, nor does it imply that all methods of (measurement are equally accurate.(۱

As for pluralism in ethics, this is a topic that has received considerable attention in recent years. As in the case of relativism, there are a large variety of ethical pluralisms. Pluralism in ethics must not be confused with the metaphysical pluralism .defended by William James or the religious pluralism advocated by John Hick

In ethics, pluralism is usually associated with the claim that there is a diversity of ideals one may legitimately pursue and that these ideals cannot be reconciled, that is, .it is only possible to pursue one at the expense of others

Sometimes this pluralism of values is stated in terms of a conflict between

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Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, Whose Justice? Which Rationality? (Notre Dame: University -۱ of Notre Dame Press, ۱۹۸۸), in which one finds a thorough refutation of this sort of .relativistic argument and others

moral and non-moral values, while others assert a plurality of irreconcilable moral values. Sometimes moral pluralism is defined as the view that there are different domains to which different moral principles apply, or in which moral considerations .have different rankings

Islam clearly affirms a limited ethical pluralism on the basis of gender. Courage and modesty are virtues that should be developed by both men and women, but for women modesty has priority over courage, and for men, courage has priority over .modesty

Most contemporary defenders of ethical pluralism, however, advocate a form of pluralism that goes beyond anything to be found in Islam. They claim that there are .radically different moral ideals none of which are superior to the others

The most notorious such view was defended by Susan Wolf in her article "Moral Saints" in which she argues that the non-moral ideal of being an expert wine (connoisseur may justifiably require the neglect of moral pursuits[(۱)]

So, attempts to prove that moral relativism and pluralism are absolutely true or false are based on confusion and lack of precision. Rather than address such broad issues in a general and vague manner, it would be much more profitable to examine the .claims of specific authors in specific texts

There are forms of relativism and pluralism that Islam appears to require, and there are other forms that it strenuously must deny. The study of philosophical ethics may .be of assistance in distinguishing them

The major theories of contemporary Western ethics are often divided into these three

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۱- Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints," The Journal of Philosophy ۷۹ (۱۹۸۲),۴۱۹-۴۳۰, reprinted in Robert B. Kruschwitz and Robert C. Roberts, eds., The virtues: Contemporary Essays .on Moral Character (Belmont: Wadsworth, ۱۹۸۷), ۱۳۷-۱۵۲

major types: deontological, teleological and virtue oriented. Aristotelian ethics are virtue oriented, Kantian ethics are deontological, and there are various forms of teleological ethics, or consequentialist ethics, of which utilitarianism has had the most

.influence in the West since the nineteenth century

During the first two thirds of the twentieth century, Western ethics was largely dominated by the debate between utilitarian's and Kantians, while in the last thirty .years; there has been a revival of Aristotelian virtue ethics

Each camp has had proponents who have claimed that the moral life can be completely described in terms of its own theory, but they have been more successful .in showing the deficiencies of their rivals than in establishing their own claims

Kantian and utilitarian theories are unsuccessful attempts to justify the morality inherited from Christianity after the rules of morality had been deprived of their teleological character through the rejection of Aristotelian philosophies, and after they had been deprived of their categorical character as expressions of divine law .through the rise of secular Protestantism

In ۱۹۵۸, the English philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe initiated the contemporary revival of virtue ethics as an attempt to provide an ethics for societies in which .religious belief had ceased to provide orientation

Her insight was that with the eclipse of religious belief, the moral force of duty and obligation could not be sustained, whether by Kantian claims on behalf of reason, or by utilitarian attempts to ground morality in the psychological states that result from .the satisfaction of desires

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She failed to see that the motivation to acquire virtue would be no less weakened when removed from the context of religious thought in which it had been nurtured in .Christian Europe

One is left with the impression that no system of ethics can be complete unless it pays adequate attention to all three elements of ethics: the moral law, the end of man, and virtue. Moreover, an ideal system of ethics should not only pay heed to these three .elements separately; it should also integrate them

This task seems so overwhelming that a number of recent moralists have advanced the view that there can be no correct theory of ethics, sometimes called "the no-theory theory."

No doubt, there will be some controversy as to whether the ethical guidance (provided by religion should be considered a theory, and we will return to this point after discussing whether religious ethics is more appropriately considered deontological, teleological or virtue oriented.)

Regardless of whether it is a theory or not, we fortunately do not need to construct a theory of ethics in order to find integrated guidance from religion in the three areas of ethics mentioned: precepts, aims and virtues. God has revealed a moral law for man; He has described the proper end of man; and He has shown us virtue in the lives of His prophets and imams (as).

So, what we find in the ethics of Islam is a mixed view of the moral life in which law, ends and virtue are

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integrated harmoniously, grounded in conceptions of divine providence and the essence and end of man, and motivated through a complex religious psychology of taqwa and love.

Of course, this does not mean that there is no work to be done in religious ethics. To follow God's guidance and to understand how these various elements are to be determined and related to one another requires a thorough knowledge of various Islamic sciences. It is by means of fiqh and usul that the law is known. An Islamic anthropology is needed to understand the end of man, which, no less than fiqh and usul, must rely upon the sciences of tafsir and hadith.

Finally, the virtues have been the particular subject of study by the 'urafa of Islam who have been especially concerned with the practical course of sayr va suluk through which the virtues are acquired, which has led to an entire genre of Islamic

literature, an excellent example of which is the book Misbah al-Shariah, which some .attribute to the sixth Imam, peace be with him

As for the issue of theory, mentioned earlier, one may wonder whether a system of ethics can be derived from the sacred texts of religion. Here we should ask what is meant by a system. Sometimes what is meant by a system of ethics is a philosophical .theory of ethics

The two, however, should not be confused. There are many systems that are by no ,means philosophical, such as organic systems, economic systems, digestive systems

mnemonic systems and galactic systems. Philosophy can be used to develop theories of such systems, but the existence of such systems does not imply that there are .theories of them

A number of recent Western moral philosophers have advanced the position that no philosophical theory can adequately explain and systematically relate all the aspects of the moral life. Perhaps the most important discussion of this topic is to be found in Bernard Williams' book, Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy, but there are several (other very interesting books and articles on the subject.(۱

Anti-theorists argue that while some aspects of morality can be codified into a set of rules and principles, there will always be a residue that escapes codification. For example, we should be courageous. On the basis of this, the rule may be formulated that we should not flee from the enemy in battle, unless to regroup or for some other strategic purpose. But no set of rules can adequately capture courage to such an extent that anyone who followed them could be said to display courage. Different situations require different sorts of responses from the courageous person in ways .that cannot be foreseen

Secondly, it is argued that many ethical norms and values are inherently vague, and that because of this vagueness they cannot be completely formulated in the form of a

.theory

Another reason given for the impossibility of a comprehensive ethical theory is the existence of moral dilemmas. It sometimes seems that moral rules pull us

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Bernard Williams, Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy (Cambridge: Harvard - ۱ University Press, ۱۹۸۵). Also see Edmund L. Pincoffs, Quandaries and virtues (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, ۱۹۸۶) and a defense of moral theory by Robert .(B. Louden, Morality and Moral Theory (New York: Oxford, ۱۹۹۲

in opposite directions. We ought not to offend others and we ought not to lie, but .sometimes it seems that there is no way to avoid offense but by lying

Here we need to evaluate which is more important. If the lie is insignificant and the offense would be serious, morality will permit the lie; but if the offense is not so .serious or if the lie is sufficiently important, morality will permit the offense

There is no way to state an exact rule for measuring and comparing the importance of various moral demands in specific situations. Thus, there is an aspect of ethics that .resists formulation into a theory

If we restrict our attention to the topics of philosophical ethics around which various theories have been constructed, we will find many that are not discussed in the religious sources. Take,for example, the issue of moral realism. Moral realists assert .that a complete description of reality must include moral facts

Theories of religious ethics derived from the Qur'an and ahadith may be formulated which accept any of various versions of moral realism, and other theories derived .from the same sources may be developed along non-realist lines

Rational reflection and evaluation may lead us to the conclusion that one of these theories is more harmonious with religious claims than the others, but this is not a matter of simple derivation from the religious sources. Furthermore, religious

.theories of ethics may be developed which do not address this topic at all

,On the other hand

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even if it is not possible to formulate a complete and comprehensive philosophical theory of religious ethics, this does not imply that philosophical discussions of religious ethics are of no benefit. Interesting questions are raised in the philosophical discussions, and by attempting to answer them we can deepen our understanding .and insight

Problems of philosophical ethics as developed in the West often have analogues in various Islamic sciences. This demonstrates the relevance of Western philosophical ethics to religious understanding, and it provides fertile ground for comparative .studies

While Muslim scholars are beginning to engage in this sort of comparative study, there are other traditions of philosophical reflection on the problems of ethics to which Muslims have not yet begun to turn their attention, such as the Chinese tradition, whose riches continue to be ignored by Muslim scholars, despite the often :quoted hadith

اطلبوا العلم ولو بالصين،

(Seek knowledge, even unto China."(۱"

The distinction between ideal ethics and mores, and our discussion of secular ethics, relativism and pluralism must not lead us to imagine that no correct ethical .understanding is possible except by the special friends of God

Moral intuition or conscience seems to be present in all human beings, even if it may be misinterpreted or neglected due to the influence of deviant mores. Moral conscience calls the individual from within to abstain from shameful acts and to seek nobility, and for this reason Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani often speaks of it as an

.interior prophet

The intellect ('aql) is reported to be

See Fayd Kashani, Mahajah al-Bayda, vol. ۱ (Qom: Daftar Intisharat Islami,۱۴۱۵),p ۲۱ -۱

an interior prophet in a well-known hadith, and an important component of the (intellect is the moral conscience.(۱

In opposition to the view of Fayd, the objection may be raised that there is a fundamental difference between the function of the prophets and that of the moral conscience. Kant is famous for his claim that when one behaves morally, one must do .what is right for its own sake, and not because of any expected benefit

The prophet(s), on the other hand, promise divine rewards for good works and chastisement for evil. So, it may seem that religious motivation for action actually .precludes the possibility of real morality

This is not a very difficult puzzle to solve. Imam 'Ali has explained it very clearly in his .saying that there are different grades of worshippers

وقال عليه السلام : إِنَّ قَوْماً عَبَدُوا اللهَ رَغْبَةً فَتِلْكَ عِبادَةُ التُّجّارِ، وَإِنَّ قَوْماً عَبَدُوا اللهَ رَهْبَةً فَتِلْكَ عِبادَةُ الْعَبِيدِ، وَإِنَّ قَوْماً عَبَدُوا اللهَ شُكْراً فَتِلْكَ عِبادَةُ الأَحْرارِ.

And [Imam 'Ali], peace be with him, said: ".And there are people who worship Allah out of desire; that is the worship of traders. And there are people who worship Allah out of fear; that is the worship of slaves. And there are people who worship Allah out of (gratitude; that is the worship of the free.(۲

When children are taught right and wrong they are scolded and praised. So they first learn to be moral out of fear of being scolded and desire for praise. But if they are properly

.See Fayd Kashani, 'Ilm al-Yaqin, vol. ۲, (Qom: Bidar), p. ۱۰۵۴ -۱
.Nahj al-Baldghah, hikmah ۲۳۷ -۲

taught, they develop a moral conscience that governs them more effectively than .threats or promises

Likewise, believers at the elementary stages obey God out of fear and hope, while the mature believer obeys out of love for God. This is why Rabi'ah 'Adawiyyah, May Allah be pleased with her, is said to have carried a torch to burn heaven and a pail of water .to put out the flames of hell

What she was really doing was encouraging believers to obey God out of love for Him :rather than because of threats and promises. She is reported to have said

Your magnificence is such that I do not worship You from fear of Your fire, nor from desire for Your paradise. Nay! But for the munificence of Your most munificent face (and the love in You.(۱

The mature believer never abandons certainty about divine rewards and .punishments, but he acts in accord with a higher motivation

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِى يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ

وَاللَّهُ

غَفُورٌ

رَحِيمٌ

Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your faults,“ (and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful” (۳:۳۱

Love of God calls forth obedience to Him and His Apostle(s). It is in the context of this love that religious ethics is best understood. Just as the promises and threats of the parents in the training of the child are expressions of the love of the parents for the child, so too, divine promises and threats are expressions of divine

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Abd al-Rahman Jami, Nafahat al-Uns min Hadarat al-Quds, ed. Dr. Mahmud 'Abadi' -۱ .(Tehran: Intisharat Itila'at, ۱۳۷۰/۱۹۹۱), p. ۵۴۴

love. What the parents command is for the benefit of the child, and what God (commands is really for the benefit of His servants.(۱

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْکَ الْکِتَابَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ

□

فَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ□

فَلِنَفْسِهِ

□

وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا

□

وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ

Surely We have revealed to you the Book with the truth for the sake of men; so" whoever follows the right way, it is for his own soul and whoever errs, he errs only to (its detriment; and you are not a custodian over them." (۳۹:۴۱

The believer sees that what God has commanded is for his benefit, and seeing this he comes to love God. The lover of God then obeys out of love for Him, even in matters in which he does not understand how the command can benefit him, but trusting in the

divine love. If he seeks that which is for his own benefit, it is because he knows that this is what God wants for him. Where the command is clear, no attention is paid to :any benefit in this world or the next but nearness to the Beloved. As Hafiz says

.My heart is the canopy of His love

.My eye holds the reflection of His face

My pride would stoop to naught here or above, yet

.My neck bends to bear the weight of His grace

One of the problems I have noticed in religious societies stems from the fact that it is mistakenly imagined that the sort of practical work needed for a

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.(Cf. (۱۰:۱۰۸), (۱۷:۱۵ -۱

moral life is the exclusive business of the great 'urafa and scholars who have written fat books testifying to their great learning, while in fact the process of purifying the .soul ought to be considered the business of all believers

To have states in which one sees everything as a sign of God does not require anything more than faith and attention, but to move beyond this to the point that the effects of spiritual wayfaring become evident in the acquisition of good morals .requires participation in the jihad al-akbar

Participation in this warfare is open, even to the illiterate, provided they have Iman, taqwa and tawassul to the divinely appointed guides, as is indicated in our invocation :of blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad and his folk

اللّهُمّ صَلّ عَلَى مُحَمّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمّدٍ

The desired ethical life of religion is displayed in the lives of the prophets and imams (as). The rest of religious ethics, religious ordinances, and spiritual wayfaring (sayr va

.suluk) elaborate practical methods to achieve this sort of desired life

Of course, we do not expect to reach this pinnacle of moral excellence ourselves, but this is because of our own failings, not because the instructions of religion are deficient. If the instructions given through divine guidance were obeyed, character .would most certainly change

Strength and himmah (resolution, aspiration) to submit in total obedience despite the satanic temptations that constantly spring from the base soul in different guises require divine aid. Reading the religious instructions to be found in

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books, even the Qur'an and ahadith, are not sufficient to bring about real change in .character

At some point we have to put the instructions we have learned from the sacred sources into practice, and on our own we will never be successful in this. We learn from the Ahl al-Bayt (as) that one of the best practical methods for acquiring good .morals is association with the virtuous

Imam Sajjad, peace be with him, said, ".Sitting with the righteous is an invitation to ".righteousness

In Shi'i teachings, we find that the practical means for the development of morals, both in the individual and in the community, are inextricably linked with the concept of walayah. Consider the lack of morals that accompanies the rejection of walayah in the characters of Abu Lahab,Mu'awiyyah and Yazid, and their followers. The traces of the excellence of character and morals that are the results of walayah and its .acceptance, on the other hand, are found in the bloodstained field of Karbala

Another practice recommended for the development of morals is contemplation of .death, and there is no better death than that which took place at Karbala

When we contemplate this death, and we consider the fact that we, too, are all in the

process of dying, that is, when we come face to face with the reality of our own impending deaths, and we compare this to the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (as), we see that the worldly pursuits that occupy us are vain, and

that what is of ultimate value is to be found by giving up all the things in the world, .even life itself, for Him

When we see death's arms stretched out before us, and we consider how those arms so lovingly embraced Husayn (as) , our interests in the charms of money, power and worldly pleasure gradually are extinguished and replaced by the light of the .remembrance of Him

In the life and martyrdom of Imam Husayn we observe how the remembrance and contemplation of Haqq ta'ala, the pollution of the lower self is wiped away to disclose .the divine love that motivates true moral excellence

In a famous hadith qudsi it is reported that God says: "Whoever seeks Me, finds Me; whoever finds Me, knows Me; whoever knows Me, loves Me; whoever loves Me, I love him; and whomever I love, I kill; and whomever I kill, I Myself am his ".(compensation (diah

Finally, the objection may be raised that if religion and ethics are as closely intertwined as I have suggested, then how is it that we find examples of genuinely moral people who are philosophical materialists and people who are apparently .religious, yet morally ruthless

The pre-Christian Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius (۹۹-۵۴ B.C.) propounded a thoroughly materialist philosophy in his De Rerum Natura, according to which all that exist are atoms and the void. Yet the way of life he advocated was one in which moral .ideals figure prominently

More recently the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin

lived a life of self-sacrifice and altruism, and even wrote an important book (۱۸۴۲-۱۹۲۱) on ethics which has been translated into several languages, although he espoused a materialistic philosophy. Moral ideals had an important place in the thought of even .those who explicitly rejected morality, such as Nietzsche and Marx

While it is not difficult to find examples of exceptional individuals who are philosophical materialists yet life according to strict ethical principles, in a religious society where moral principles are bound up with religious teachings, it is natural to .view materialism as a rejection of morality because of its denial of religious teachings

This is why the idea that if there is no God, then everything is permitted assumes such importance for the Russian novelist Dostoevsky (۱۸۲۱-۱۸۸۱). This also explains why the fact that so many Americans proclaim their religious faith while rejecting traditional religious morals is met with such incomprehension by those who live in traditional .religious societies

The source of the erosion of religious morality lies not in philosophical materialism, but in the structure of modern liberal secular society. Modern secular societies, in accord with liberal political theory, have established a complex system of rights designed for the purpose of protecting individual liberties, the result of which has .been the expansion of the sphere of anonymity in which its citizens live

Urbanization and mobility also contribute to this result. Religious social mores are effective when one's actions are seen by others who share one's religious values, so that the

.violation of religious or moral precepts causes a sense of shame

In modern urban societies, when one's actions are performed before others who are strangers and about whom no assumptions can be made with regard to moral approbation or condemnation, and who are presumed to have no right to pass any

sort of moral judgment because morals are considered private and personal, the .agent becomes anonymous

Recall the story of the ring of Gyges told by Socrates in Book II of Plato's Republic. Socrates asks, if one were in possession of a magic ring that would make one invisible ?at will, who would refrain from sleeping with his neighbor's wife

Religion teaches that even if we are not seen by men, nothing can be hidden from God. Even where there is no shame before one's fellows, there is guilt before God. Nevertheless, where social anonymity prevails, temptation will often prove too strong .to be resisted, even by those who consider themselves to be religious

When anonymous sin becomes common, excuses and rationalizations soon abound and the moral sense is gradually eroded. Then a process sets in which are the reverse of that described in my answer to the first question. The outward shell of religion and a false sense of spirituality will be the last things abandoned as hypocrisy comes to rob religion of its moral content. And this is much more harmful than isolated cases of .philosophical materialism and moral nihilism

In order to understand the moral dangers facing modern

Muslim societies, it is necessary to become acquainted with the moral psychology of hypocrisy. The greatest danger to the Muslim ummah has always come from .hypocrisy. All of the imams achieved martyrdom at the hands of Muslim hypocrites

The hands of hypocrites also carried out the terror by which so many leaders of the Islamic Revolution of Iran achieved martyrdom. The new form of treachery against .the Muslim ummah is the attempt to erode Islamic morals from within Islamic society

In Western secular societies, the erosion of morals takes place through the expansion of the sphere of anonymity, the ample provision of satanic temptations, and the .dominant social perspective that morals are a private matter

In modern Muslim societies, social anonymity also poses a danger, although it has not reached the levels found in the West. Fortunately, al-Hamdu li-Allah, the idea that .morals are private has not won wide acceptance in the Muslim world

Hypocrisy enters the Islamic world with the mistaken perception that it is "advanced" to disregard Islamic morals, especially with regard to hijab, the relations between the .sexes, and the gathering of wealth by haram means

Likewise, Mu'awiyyah thought that to be "advanced" Islamic government had to follow the examples of imperial Rome and Iran. The hypocrites seek to make use of Islam for the purposes of Satan and the base soul, for gaining the things of this world, while the true believers are those who seek to make use of everything they have, even their own

.lives, for the purposes of Islam

The danger posed to man by philosophical materialism is not serious, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the rejection of dialectical materialism that prevails in the world today. There are other forms of materialism and related philosophical theories current among philosophers in the West, but it seems unlikely .that these would ever gain wide public support

Much more dangerous to man is the tendency to set one's moral standards according to what are perceived to be the "advanced" ways of life portrayed in Western cinema, which is really merely an instance of the more general failure to engage in the moral .orientation offered by religion, and to follow worldly temptations instead

Complaints about insufficient wealth to purchase desired consumer products are heard too frequently among those who call themselves Muslims. A man will gladly put in an extra twenty hours of work each week to be able to purchase a beautiful automobile. How much time are we willing to spend in the effort to obtain moral excellence? It is fitting to conclude by reflecting on the prayer with which Imam

.Khomeini ends his Forty Hadiths

O God, Who has illuminated the hearts of the awliya' with the light of love and cleared the tongues of the lovers of Your beauty from the taints of egoism, and has placed Your majesty beyond the reach of self-seeking wretches! Awaken us from the intoxication of worldly delusion and deliver us from the heavy slumber of nature, and

remove with Your gesture the thick curtains and obstructing veils of egotism and self-seeking. Let us into the assembly of the holy ones of Your threshold and into the holy company of the sincere God-seekers. Remove from us these devilish, ugly, and coarse qualities of ours and our pretensions and waywardness. Inform with sincerity and love our movements and pauses, our actions and works, our beginning and end, (and our outward and inward being.(۱

Warnings Of Corporate Moral Failure In Islam

Introduction: Red Lights

Red lights serve a variety of functions, but here we shall be concerned with their use as warning devices. The image of the red light flashing on to indicate some danger will be used to draw pertinent analogies with respect to issues in the ethics of individual responsibilities toward corporate entities and social institutions such as governments, .businesses, families, and social organizations

The issuance of warnings is also one of the primary prophetic functions, and if we .look, we find that Islam has its own red lights

Corporations have powers and liabilities beyond those of their members. In certain respects, a corporation is like a complex piece of machinery that requires many .operators. When it is in operation, it is as if the machine has a life of its own

Such a piece of machinery would have a number of red lights that would indicate to the operators when various problems arose. Some red lights would signal to an .individual operator that something over which he had direct control was awry

It could indicate, for

.Translated by 'Ali Quli Qara'i in Al-Tawhid, vol. ۱۴, No. ۳, p. ۱۸ -۱

example, that the operator should replace a part. Other red lights would have a more global significance. They would indicate to a number of operators that appropriate action should be taken to avoid some danger. Such danger might arise as the unintended consequence of acts by the operators that, though innocuous in them, combine together in a way which may have disastrous effects. This kind of phenomenon is sometimes likened to the effects of an invisible hand. Financial .institutions utilize a number of indicators to guard against such invisible hand effects

Just as there are warning lights to indicate local and global mechanical problems, responsible members of corporate entities should utilize ethical indicators when .decisions are made about involvement in corporate activities

However, while red lights are commonly found to warn the operators of complex pieces of machinery, ethical indicators with respect to individual and corporate moral responsibilities are rare. Most institutions make some provisions for censure in cases of gross misconduct, but these are limited. In no way are they adequate to guide the .complex moral decision making necessary in the corporate environment

Consider, for example, the health care system in the United States. This system involves doctors, patients, lawyers, administrators, insurance companies, hospital workers, and many others. Doctors are subject to peer scrutiny and possible censure .for wrongdoing by the American Medical Association

But this association is also an advocacy group on the behalf of doctors, and as such appears reluctant to accuse its members of wrongdoing in all

but the most extreme cases. Thus, the task of moral censure falls to the judicial

.system

This has resulted in widespread public debate over the reluctance doctors to perform procedures which have resulted in frequent litigation, and over the prohibitively high insurance rates in areas of specialization where litigation is common, most notably in .pediatrics

The institutional system of red lights, the A.M.A. and the courts, are not providing the kind of moral warnings needed in the health care industry. A similar lack of moral .guidance could be cited in other professions, social institutions and corporations

The most important red lights to indicate the moral peril of association with various corporations must be self-installed. Instructions for the self-installation of red lights .are provided in the teachings of the prophets and Imams, peace be with them

It may be argued that the kinds of moral safeguards that are needed with regard to corporate entities are not institutional procedures, but values and commitments on the part of the individual members of such entities. According to this way of thinking, we do not really need red lights in the corporate machine; we just need honest .operators

There are no special criteria needed to govern behavior in the corporate setting other than general ethical duties and principles. There are several problems with this point of view. First, there is the invisible hand effect mentioned earlier, that is, even when individuals observe their duties and act morally, the institution as a whole may have moral

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.failings

Second, if one benefits from the profits of a corporation, then without red lights, there will be a tendency to ignore corporate faults. Third, the moral principles that govern action in personal life do not always coincide with the principles by which public action (is or should be governed.(۱

Furthermore, there are a number of moral questions that arise regarding involvement in corporate activities that tend to be slighted in most standard approaches to ethics. Suppose I know that there is corruption in the corporation, but I do not know which members of the corporation are corrupt. Should I disassociate myself from such a corporation? What if the corporation provides vital services that will be diminished by my resignation? What if I have reason to believe that by staying, ?I may be able to limit the corruption

These are just a few of the questions about individual involvement in corporate activities which reveal the need for red lights, that is, for special moral criteria and .institutional apparatus to warn of moral peril due to involvement in corporate activity

In short, moral criteria are needed to evaluate corporate behavior per se, the global behavior of the corporation itself, as well as the behavior of individuals or groups of individuals within the corporation. Such criteria are needed because of the present lack of corporate moral reflection and because individual ethics tends to emphasize autonomous individual acts rather than corporate behavior or the interactions among .individuals and corporate entities

Once we recognize that some

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۱ - This point is argued by Thomas Nagel in "Ruthlessness in Public Life" in Mortal .Questions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ۱۹۷۹), pp. ۷۵-۹۰

system of red lights is needed, we can turn to design problems. Safety features must be designed in such a way that operation of the machinery is not unduly hindered. It is .not practical to check every possible flaw prior to each operation of the machine

So too, we cannot expect to put into practice a system of moral checks that would require so much attention that the effective operation of the corporation would be thwarted. Charles E. Larmore has recently defended the claim that some moral :shortcomings are to be tolerated as the cost of bureaucratic efficiency

The political value of predictability is considerable enough that to a certain degree we are willing to forego having the decisions of government display all the subtlety that (we expect of the truly virtuous and morally wise.(۱)

The thorny problem of how to weigh safety risks with losses in production finds its analogue in the problem of how to weigh the seriousness of possible moral failings against the threats moral challenges pose to the unimpeded functioning of the corporate entity. How do we measure evil against efficiency? There are many other .difficult questions, as well

The system of warning indicators should be reliable. Not every rumor of corruption is to be answered by an investigation, but the persistence of rumors from various .sources is cause for alarm

Red lights should be placed where they will be visible to operators who can respond to them. This suggests two important desiderata of a system of moral warnings

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۱ - Charles E. Larmore, Patterns of Moral Complexity (Cambridge: Cambridge .University Press, ۱۹۸۷), p. ۴۲

for corporate entities. First, analogous to the visibility of the red lights is the effectiveness of the moral warning system. The National News Council in the U.S. .provides an example of a warning system that failed largely because of its invisibility

The NNC was designed to investigate charges brought against the media of malicious misreporting and other unethical practices. The leaders of the industry, however, .tended to simply ignore the criticisms made by the NNC

The NNC was unable to gain the attention of the industry, and eventually went out of business. Second, just as a red light can only be useful if it is able to elicit a response which decreases the danger of which it warns so too, a system of moral warnings .must be designed with some idea of the appropriate responses they are to command

The red light on the dashboard may indicate that the oil level is low. The appropriate response would be to add oil. But other considerations may need to be taken into .account. If we recently added oil, we might decide to check for a leak

If it is an emergency and no oil is available, we might decide it is necessary to continue to drive, even with the prospect of burning out the engine. Likewise moral criteria for corporate behavior and for individual involvement in corporate entities need not be .absolute

Moral guidelines may even fail to prescribe a specific response to a moral failing; yet they may provide guidance by indicating

.the kinds of factors that need to be considered when making a moral decision

Both theoretical problems and problems of design for a system of moral warnings with respect to association with corporations are so complicated that one may be tempted to conclude that the project is hopeless. Consider the disanalogies between mechanical alarm systems and the proposed system of moral warnings. Precise .criteria may be specified to trigger mechanical alarms

Stress levels, fluid pressures, and circuit checks are readily quantifiable. Dishonesty, cruelty and corruption are much more difficult to estimate. Situations that call for the overriding of mechanical warning systems are limited. Extenuating circumstances .relevant to moral judgments are more the rule than the exception

The responses to be elicited by mechanical warning devices are predictable. Ethical warnings typically require responses which involve a certain moral creativity, an ability to discover a course of action which draws on insights with respect to the characters of the implicated persons while balancing considerations of means and .ends. There is no formula for practical wisdom

The recognition of such enormous difficulties does not excuse the failure to attempt to make some limited progress toward systematic moral warning with regard to

involvement in corporate activities. The fact that preparations cannot be made for the .occasion of all possible moral dangers does not justify failure to prepare for any

The latitude that must be allowed for responses to a moral danger does not obviate the need for a warning when such danger arises. The obtrusiveness of

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extenuating circumstances does not diminish the need to consider the general features of the circumstances in which problems of individual responsibilities toward .corporate entities arise

Corporate Moral Failure

The evils that are to trigger our moral red lights are all too common: dishonesty, corruption, injustice. In some circumstances, to perpetrate such evils is to violate the .law. The justice system may therefore be considered a system of moral red lights

However, there are many forms of corporate moral failure that escape the justice system. Institutions of international justice are extremely limited, weak, and not without biases of their own. An international judiciary never addresses most injustices .committed by nations

So, even evils that would be confronted by a justice system in some contexts will be ignored in others. Often the context in which violations of the law go unreported is one .of corporate conspiracy

One of the few topics in the ethics of corporate activities that has received attention in philosophical literature is that of corporate whistle-blowing. Some forms of corporate .evil escape judicial scrutiny because they involve abstruse financial and legal dealings

Nevertheless, all these cases are ones in which the evil is either criminal, or is of the same sort as criminal activity, or would be criminal, were it not for the absence of an appropriate mechanism for prosecution. Let us refer to all such evils as criminal, whether or not there is a legal system within whose jurisdiction the commission of

.such evils falls

In addition to criminal evils there are many

other kinds of corporate evil or moral failure. A corporation, for example, may pollute the atmosphere while keeping within the standards set by the appropriate regulatory .commission

Corporations, like people, may do a great number of bad things without breaking the law. In some cases legal evils skirt the limits of the law, as in the pollution case. Some evils are legal because legislation against them would be unenforceable. The law permits some evils because legislation against them is seen as worse than the legal .perpetration of the evil

Some corporate evils are prosecuted. Local, national and international courts thus provide a system of red lights; they warn the public of corporate wrongdoing. There are two types of problems with using legal systems as moral warnings. First, there are flaws in the legal systems. Jurisdiction is limited in scope, and in areas to which it .extends, it is misapplied. Second, there are non-criminal corporate evils

The judiciary is not the only social institution whose actions may be seen as indicators of the moral danger of corporate activity, various industries are monitored by associations which publish ethical guidelines and which censor violators. In the context of international relations, there are international organizations that attempt .to monitor human rights violations

Most of what has been mentioned here with regard to the judicial system could be repeated with regard to industrial associations and international organizations. They may serve to warn of corporate evil, but their effectiveness is circumscribed by the unreliability of their findings, by their

.limitations of scope, and by their relative invisibility

Most of what has been said in this section so far is true of both individual evils and corporate evils. What gives corporate evil its distinctive flavor is the fact that often .times no individual appears to be blameworthy for the corporate evil

Suppose that because of a flaw in the management structure of a corporation, incompetent people rise to leadership positions. Through their ineptitude harm is done. The unfit officers might be blameless in themselves, while evil is done at the fault of the system. All parties involved can justify their actions on the grounds that .they are just doing their jobs, and doing them as best they can

Another typical sort of case is one in which a large corporation forces many small business people to go bankrupt. The members of the board of directors of the corporation are only fulfilling their duties to the stockholders. The stockholders have .no direct influence on corporate policy

As a result, there appears to be no one to blame, yet, justifiably or not, evil is done. Judgments on an action being criminal, or not, will depend on one's political view. Some will justify the evil in the name of economic progress, and claim that the evil is .not criminal

Others will argue that legislation should have been enacted and enforced to prevent the evil, which would thus be criminal in the sense defined above. Similar .controversies arise over industrial and international guidelines

An important element in a

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system of moral warnings about institutional behavior is the press. Corporate evils that are neither punishable by law nor proscribed by any commission or recognized .set of guidelines may be exposed and debated in the press

The press can warn when the judicial system breaks down and guidelines are ignored.

Reliable investigative journalism coupled with responsible editorial policies can serve as an important means to alert communities to political corruption, corporate exploitation, and other social evils. Sadly, this system of red lights is short-circuited when the press is controlled by the very institutions that should come under its .scrutiny

This is most obvious when the state controls the press, but even in places where the press is supposed to be free; there are often indirect ways in which the politically and financially powerful are able to exert such pressure on the press and other public .media that they are not able to play an effective role as red lights

Very large-scale corporate evils can involve an entire society. Marx claimed that capitalism causes alienation, and although he disdained the morality of his day, his critique of nineteenth century European society was largely an appeal to the moral sentiments of his readers. Social critics, whether to the left or right on the political .spectrum, are red lights

They can warn of profound moral failings that are independent of any personal wrongdoing, but that lie at the very heart of the structure of society. Well established traditions are confronted by accusations of systematic

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defect. Such criticisms can even threaten the personal allegiances upon which the life of the tradition depends. The unfortunate result is that social criticism is often .suppressed

As a system of moral admonition with regard to corporate actions, social criticism has a number of serious drawbacks. It is no alternative to positive institutional frameworks for the investigation and censure of corporate wrongdoing. It is often .vague

The root ills it points out are notoriously difficult to remedy. The evaluation of social criticism is recondite. The range of institutions targeted by social critics is relatively

small. Few social critics write about specific professions or industries. Where it is not suppressed, social criticism of quality is largely ignored. Despite such difficulties, social .criticism provides an invaluable source of moral reflection on corporate activities

Social criticism is not the exclusive province of the academy. At its most vulgar, it can be found in popular forms of entertainment, and in ordinary complaint. Complaints are red lights. Those who complain often tell of being wronged by institutions, caught in .the bureaucracy, victimized by the state, shafted

These complaints are warnings that something has gone afoul at a corporate level. Of course, complaints often turn out to be unjustified, or mere expressions of personal dissatisfaction with the result of a particular encounter with a corporate entity. But because of their personal quality, ordinary complaints are especially forceful catalysts .for the moral reevaluation of one's relations to corporate entities

If we want to understand the nature of corporate evil

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in order to make explicit the moral principles which are distinctive of corporate behavior and individual involvement with corporate entities, we can begin by examining the systems of red lights which are already in place: international .declarations, laws, professional guidelines, and social criticisms

These provide some indications of the kinds of corporate activities that generally arouse moral condemnation. Corporate entities are obliged to operate without many of the personal preferences that are expected of individuals. On the other hand, corporate entities are permitted a callousness which would be condemnable in an .individual

Moral expectations shift when we change from dealings with an individual to dealings with a committee. Here we only indicate the shift without delineating the specific differences between personal and corporate morality. At one time, perhaps, .corporate entities were identified with their leaders

There was no difference between loyalty to the kingdom and loyalty to the king. With the movement away from autocracy and toward constitutional government, the moral expectation is that governments should adhere strictly to their constitutions, though they may display less sensitivity than an autocrat might. The potential wisdom .of individual judgment is traded for the consistency of the bureaucracy

The question of the morality of association with corporate entities can also be approached by considering the difference between the requirements of loyalty to an individual and to an institution. Individual loyalty depends on the possibility of moral dialogue, which is most often missing in relations between an individual and a .corporate entity

The impersonal magnitude

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of the large corporate entity and lack of moral exchange have a tendency to alienate the individual from his own moral concerns with respect to one's role in corporate activities. The Nuremberg trials make a significant statement with regard to the ethics of corporate activity precisely because they impose limits on the extent to which .individual responsibility can be diluted in the corporate mechanism

These limits block the flow of responsibility from the individual to the corporation, but this has no impact on the flow of responsibility in the other direction. In the next section, we shall return to the question of how corporate evil can taint those who participate in the corporation, even when they are not directly involved in any .misdeeds

?What Is To Be Done

Once systems of red lights are in place and are recognized, the question of how to respond to such moral warnings must be addressed. Some cases are more problematic than others. Where there are institutional apparatus to investigate and punish some corporate evils, there will be conflicts between one's duty to report violations of ethical standards and loyalty to the corporation or to colleagues who may

.be engaged in wrongdoing

However, the most difficult moral cases arise in areas to which such apparatus do not .extend, or where they are defeated

If one finds a colleague engaged in some wrongful activity, one may attempt dissuasion. Failing that, one can approach one's superiors about the matter. Such efforts will be in vain when there is complicity at the

.highest levels of the corporation

The next step is whistle-blowing. One can go outside the corporation to an industrial association, the courts, or to the press. However, if the corporate evil is seen to be relatively minor, and attempts made within the corporation fail, it is unlikely that one .will be able to succeed outside

We can begin to appreciate the moral problems this kind of situation poses by examining the cases of two minor officials. First, suppose someone who works at City Hall learns that one of the council members regularly has parking violations fixed for his close relatives. The mayor refuses to do anything about it because he needs the .counselor's vote on the budget proposal

The public prosecutor will not take up the case unless instructed to do so by the mayor's office. The press and the public are uninterested in such petty crime. Frustrated, the employee simply complains about the venality of public officials. Here is a small flashing red light, warning of corporate evil, yet unable to elicit an .appropriate response

Our second government employee learns of torture in the prisons. In many places throughout the world, there are such government employees. Sadly, in too many places the complaints of this employee are met with much the same reaction as faced .the municipal worker

If the torture is limited and primarily focused on an unpopular minority or on a so-called terrorist group, the press and public will often show little or no concern about allegations of mistreatment

.in the prisons. The red light is ignored, if not extinguished

The prospects are even worse when the corporate evil is not the product of the misdeeds of a few individuals within the corporation, but is a result of impersonal corporate forces. Here there is little reason to expect that by climbing the corporate chain of command with one's complaints, one will find corporate officers willing to .confront their superiors with a moral challenge to their policies

Arrangements that exclude disadvantaged elements of the society from economic opportunities are often perpetuated in this way. Short of governmental intervention, .there is normally little hope that such policies and arrangements will be corrected

Whether corporate evil is found in private companies or in government, the only means of effective response to specific wrongs is often through governmental action. Regulatory agencies, oversight committees and special investigations are often .needed if there is to be any alteration in an entire ecology of evil

Of course, these treatments of moral ills often bring with them further moral afflictions, for the politicians who must be relied upon to correct institutional moral flaws are not motivated exclusively by moral interests, and even with the best intentions, corrective measures frequently have unexpected results. Nevertheless, .political action constitutes an important response to corporate evil

We can now begin to see the development of a series of responses to moral warnings of corporate immorality. The order in this series is not strict. Sometimes direct public action such as a boycott will be more effective

than recourse to the law or to legislative bodies. Nonetheless, some steps can be .outlined

First, there is the attempt to persuade specific miscreants. Then, one can climb the chain of corporate command with complaints. Next, one can complain to professional organizations, union officials, or regulatory agencies. Next, one can seek judicial redress. Failing all these measures, one can undertake political activity, or seek the .attention of the press

Political activity can take a wide variety of forms; it can be violent or peaceful, it can occur within existing political structures or outside them. But by the time we find it necessary to take political action, we are a long way off from the specific instances of .corporate evil that drove us in this direction

From this distance, the point of the initial evil is often lost. Because he allows a counselor to fix parking tickets, should we campaign against an otherwise fine mayor who faces no respectable opposition? We may even find ourselves unable to oppose the counselor, if in other respects we are satisfied and we can expect nothing better .from the opposition

We may be able to tolerate fixed tickets, you may think, but not torture. Somewhere between the two, even if we cannot say exactly where, a line must be drawn beyond .which we dare not tread. This is no simple matter

We may be able to construct a hypothetical case in which we would abide an isolated beating hidden in some dungeon if by failing to support the authorities

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who overlook the beating we would strengthen the hand of an even more monstrous faction in the government or opposed to it. Perhaps we would offer our support under .protest

There is palpable moral danger here, and it is not merely hypothetical. Certainly the major powers, as well as most other governments, are guilty of atrocities, either

directly or by proxy. Yet many morally responsible people find themselves compelled to support these governments. Unless directly confronted with horror, moral .blindness pervades; the red lights blink for naught

To say that there is no alternative, even if it is true, is no excuse. Even in cases where support for an unjust institution is morally defensible because of the need to avoid greater injustice, there are alternatives. Where possible, one should attempt reform. Given the futility of reform, one can fight. Where struggle against the institution will .just make matters worse, there is the possibility of resignation

There is a broad spectrum of positions with relation to an institution, from total support and identification to revolutionary rejection and renunciation. Perhaps resignation from the institution is the most extreme reaction, because of the lack of hope it implies. The revolutionist at least labors under the hope that positive change .can come about through his efforts

Renunciation can take a number of forms. It might mean that one resigns from one position in the government or corporation, but accepts another. The act of resigning can be a form of protest. If one's position in the corporation is

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.sufficiently valued, the threat of resignation can also exert pressure for reform

Resignation can also provide a platform from which to issue criticisms that could not be delivered from within the institution. The expatriate may write a stinging expose of the moral decadence of the forsaken society, which would result in his imprisonment if he remained at home. The political exile may mount a campaign from abroad. These .are political activities

The most extreme manner of resigning is simple abandonment. It implies a violation .of one's special obligations

Special obligations ensue from propinquity. We have special obligations to our families, our countries, our societies, and even to the professions we have chosen

.and, to some extent, to the corporations for which we have worked

Naturally, there can be overriding moral reasons that these obligations should be violated, but this is not to deny the violation. Sometimes the opportunity to live a good life in exile may warrant the total desertion of one's native environs, but there is a moral price to pay. The fact of that moral price stems from the reality of missed opportunity to effect moral growth in the context of one's home. Sometimes it just .cannot be helped

The hometown has nothing to offer. There isn't any opportunity. The hazard lurking here is the illusion that purity can be achieved. The exile who thinks that by keeping aloof he can regain his innocence deceives him. It does not follow from the fact that a corporate entity commits

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.sins, that one's duties to that entity are thereby annulled

On the other hand, benefiting through participation in a corrupt institution does taint one. Consider the case of Mr. X; he is a partner in a legitimate family business. Recently, members of the family have been using the business as a front for criminal activity. The police have been paid off, and the press is not interested in the story. Mr. X tries unsuccessfully to persuade his partners to abandon crime. He may resign from .the family business

If he resigns he can have no influence on the business, but if he remains in his current position, he will be able to prevent the family from committing murders. Mr. X is in an unhappy position. It is wrong for Mr. X to resign, because to resign is to refuse to prevent murder. It is also wrong for Mr. X not to resign, for by failing to resign, he becomes an accomplice to crime. He must distance himself from the business to the .greatest extent consistent with the maintenance of his ability to prevent the murders

Suppose that Mr. X stays with the family business, but tries to insulate himself from its criminal aspects by basing his salary on a percentage of the legitimate dealings of the

business, and by refusing to become personally involved in any criminal activity, except by giving advice on how to extort payments from clients without resorting to .violence

Many clients conduct their legitimate business with X because

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of fear of reprisals if they go elsewhere. So, X benefits indirectly from the criminal activity of the family business. Clearly, Mr. X shares to some extent in the guilt of his family. One may even be tempted to argue that he shares equally with the other partners in responsibility for the crime, except that Mr. X's indirection makes possible .a hypocrisy of which the other partners are free

This view is mistaken for two reasons. First, Mr. X's voiced opposition to the criminal activity of the business reduces, though it does not eliminate, his responsibility for this activity. Second, Mr. X is not directly engaged in extortion. The moral preferability of indirect over direct involvement in wrongdoing can be argued on rule-utilitarian .grounds, as well as from deontological and Aristotelian perspectives

Direct violation of moral obligations does more to weaken general determination to comply with the obligation, and thus threatens the character of the subject of such .violation to a greater extent than doe’s indirect violation

Whether through renunciation, protest, expatriation, or even mental reservation, it is morally essential that some distance be placed between oneself and corporate evil. The ways in which we see ourselves, our ideas of who we are, of what we are prepared to tolerate and what we will not countenance, all of this is in part determined by the positions we take with respect to nations, governments, families, .traditions, civilizations, religions, institutions and corporations

To a large extent one's moral character is defined in terms

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of allegiance and opposition to traditions and institutions, to subcultures and social movements. Our moral activities take place on a field whose dimensions are partially determined by the positions one occupies through such support and antagonism. We are responsible for the manner in which we participate in corporate entities. The point :is well put by Jurgen Habermas

Every carrying on of a tradition is selective, and it is just this selectivity that must be drawn through the filter of critique, of a deliberate appropriation of history-if you will, (or a consciousness of sins.(۱

We have a responsibility to choose from among the best of the alternatives open to us, even when all the alternatives are bad. There are moral dilemmas that have no solutions. There are circumstances in which the question, "What is to be done?" has .no answer

This should not be cause for despair. It does not mean that there is nothing to be done in situations of moral dilemma, but that the best courses cannot be discerned by means of any formula or decision procedure. It requires wisdom to see what is best in .such cases, and even the best alternatives available will remain problematic

The Red Light Of Islam

The issues of individual responsibility with respect to corporate entities, involvement in corporate evil, politico-religious exile, mental reservation, open revolt against tyranny, limited cooperation with unjust governments, these and related topics are .treated extensively in the Islamic tradition

Allusion to such topics can be found in the Qur'an, in ahadith, religious biographies, and in

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Jurgen Habermas makes this point in an interview which appeared in Die Neue - ۱ Gessellshaft: Frankfurter Heft ۴, April ۱۹۸۹, translated by Stephen K. White in Philosophy and Social Criticism ۴/۱۴:۳, p. ۴۳۹

jurisprudence. Perhaps more than the members of any of the other great religions of the world, Muslims have defined themselves in terms of moral positions taken with respect to the formation of communities in various social, political, and religious .historical settings

The major religious division in the Islamic world, between Sunni and Shi'i Islam, is based upon conflicting interpretations and evaluations of history in which the moral .dimensions of social and political conditions are paramount

Since this writer lacks the competence to provide a detailed review of the vast Islamic literature on this subject, a few citations will be given which provide some indication of the moral reflection about associations with corporate entities which abounds in the context of Islamic history and

.jurisprudence

Particularly relevant to the question of associations with corporate entities are the :following ayat from the Qur'an

And guard yourselves against an affliction which may not smite those of you" (exclusively who are unjust; and know that Allah is severe in requital." (۸:۲۵

And do not incline towards those who are unjust, lest the fire touch you, and you" (have no guardians besides Allah, then you shall not be helped." (۱۱:۱۱۳

Let not the believers take the disbelievers for friends rather than believers. And" whoever does this has no connection with Allah–except that you guard yourselves against them, guarding carefully. And Allah cautions you against His retribution. And to (Allah is the eventual coming." (۳:۲۷

The first two ayat warn against association with an unjust group, even when one does

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not participate in the injustice. The third ayah makes allowances for dissimulation. Association with an unjust group is permitted as a means of protection from greater

.evil

With regard to dissimulation, it is reported in Shaykh al Saduq's I'tiqadatu al-:Imamiyyah

And Imam Ja'far [as] said: "Verily, I hear a man abusing me in the mosque; and I hide behind a pillar so that he may not see me." And he (Imam Ja'far) said: "Mix with the people (enemies) outwardly, but oppose them inwardly, so long as the Amirate ((imratun) is a matter of opinion."(١)

Another ayah that can be interpreted as demanding that one disassociate oneself :from corporate evil when one is powerless to fight it is the following

Surely (as for) those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to their" souls, they shall say: In what state were you? They shall say: We were weak in the earth. They shall say: Was not Allah's earth spacious, so that you should have (migrated therein? So these it is whose abode is Hell, and it is an evil resort."(۴:۹۷

God's earth is still wide enough for those who believe to quit injustice; the question of how and in what circumstances what sort of response is appropriate remains one which calls for wisdom, not a rule. In his Risalah, Imam Khomeini wrote about :association with the leaders of unjust governments

If the association and frequentation of the prominent religious authorities with the oppressors and the kings of tyranny result in

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Shaykh al-Saduq, A Shi'ite Creed, tr. Asaf A. A. Fyzee, (Tehran: WOFIS, ۱۹۸۲), p. ۹۷- -۱ .۹۸

amelioration of their cruelty they must consider whether the breakage of association is preferable to the abatement of cruelty, since it is possible that such associations will cause weakening of the peoples' beliefs and will result in dishonoring Islam and Islamic authorities. Thus, they must choose whatever is most important and act

(accordingly.(۱

This edict is interesting because it does not prescribe a specific course of action, but rather draws attention to some moral considerations that are left to be weighed by the individuals concerned. A similar ambiguity can be found in Shaykh Muzaffar's earlier treatment of the same issue, in which non-cooperation with oppressive governments is demanded, while exceptions are allowed where this may result in .sufficiently commendable consequences

However, while Imam Khomeini stresses the importance of cutting off relations with oppressors, Shaykh Muzaffar places more emphasis on cooperation with the unjust in .order to ameliorate their wickedness

He explains the armed struggle of Imam Husayn as required to keep Islam from being destroyed, but emphasizes that such action should be taken with great reluctance, and that the Imams who succeeded Husayn , since they realized that there was no hope to establish a truly Islamic government, occupied themselves with (education rather than insurrection.(۲

Shaykh al-Mufid's Kitab al-'Irshad is replete with discussions of how the Imams behaved with respect to usurped or unjust authority exercised in the name of Islam. For example, a number of instances are described in which legal advice is given by .Imam 'Ali to the caliphs

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Ayatollah Sayyed Ruhollah Mousavi Khomeini, A Clarification of Questions, tr. J. - ۱ .Borujerdi (Boulder: Westview Press, ۱۹۸۴), question ۲۸۰۹, p. ۳۷۷

Muhammad Riga al-Muzaffar, The Faith of Shi'a Islam (London: Routledge Kegan - ۲ .Paul, ۱۹۸۲), pps. ۶۷-۷۱

:After introducing the Imamate of Husayn, Shaykh al-Mufid writes

According to what we have (just) mentioned the Imamate of al-Husayn, peace be on

him, was confirmed after the death of his brother al-Hasan, peace be on him, and the obedience of all creatures to him was binding, although he did not summon them to (follow) him because of precautionary dissimulation (taqiyya) which he was following and because of the truce which existed between him and Mu'awiya b. Abu Sufyan and the need to fulfill it. In that he followed the same course as his father, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, in terms of the establishment of his Imamate after the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, despite (his own) silence (about it), and also of the Imamate of his brother after the truce despite (his) abstention (from politics) and (his) silence. In that they were acting according to the practices (sunan) of the Prophet of God, may God bless him and his family, when he was blockaded in al-Shi'b and when he escaped Mecca as an emigrant by hiding in a cave and he was hidden from his enemies.(١)

The life of Imam Husayn exemplifies both accommodation with and revolt against an unjust institution. The literature on Imam Husayn's campaign against the army of Yazid and his subsequent martyrdom abounds with discussions of the responsibilities of an individual toward family, religion, government, and supporters.(٢)

The general context of the discussion of how to affect reform is

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١ - Shaykh al-Mufid, Kitab al-'Irshad. tr. I. K. A. Howard (London: The Muhammadi Trust, ١٩٨١). p. ٢٩٨

٢ - See Ayatullah Mahmid Taleqani, et al., Jihdd and Shahadat: Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam (Houston: Institute for Research and Islamic Studies, ١٩٨٦).

the duty to enjoin the good and forbid evil, amr bil ma'ruf wa nahl 'an al-munkar. This duty is considered fundamental in Shi'i Islam, and its practice is discussed in the basic works of Islamic law. We are commanded to seek to reform the evils we encounter.

These attempts are to precede by stages so that the use of force may be kept to a minimum, and the attempts are not to be undertaken at all unless one has hope that one will finally be successful. First, one is to speak privately with the miscreant.

.Indirection is recommended

An attempt is to be made to save the wrongdoer from any embarrassment. Then public protest becomes appropriate. Only after other means have proven .unsuccessful to stop the commission of evil, may force be employed

Here we find a basis for the institutionalization of corporate checks and balances: such measures can prevent the need for violent resistance to evil. One who can be removed from office by election will not have to be violently expelled from office if he acts wrongly. Those who operate under the scrutiny of a free press will be less likely .to do what is forbidden than those whose acts remain hidden

The media also serve as the fora for the sort of protest that is one of the stages of enjoining the good. Public accountability is not merely an artifact of modern liberal political thought; it can serve to promote accord with divine commands, and it may be

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seen as essential for the fulfillment of the duty to enjoin the good and forbid evil in .modern societies

Only when non-violent means are not available, or are unsuccessful, is the final resort of combat to be employed. Sometimes the topic of jihad is discussed as a form of enjoining the good and forbidding evil. Even when jihad is apparently unsuccessful, the struggle itself may be sufficient to alter the circumstances to the extent that evil .may be seen for what it is

During the caliphate of Yazid, the evil done in the name of Islam had reached such a level that the integrity of Islam as a religious institution was threatened. Unless Islam itself could furnish a red light bright enough to annul the religious credentials of the (caliphate, the moral claim of the Islamic call would be eclipsed.(۱

As for the red light, Allah sends the prophets (s) as warners. The prophets themselves are red lights. The ayat of the Qur'an describing the prophets as warner's, are too .numerous to mention. Something is wrong with the human condition

People are negligent of their interwoven moral and religious duties. They have become distracted by the glitter of worldly luxuries and power. The lower self dominates until the spirituality of the prophets dawns on the minds of men, reminding .them of the need to restore the covenant with Allah

And We send not messengers but as announcers of good news and givers of“ warning; then whoever believes and acts aright, they shall have

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For the relation between enjoining the good and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn -۱ see Shahid Mutahhari's Ta'thir-e 'Unsur-e Amr bima'ruf dar Nehdat Imam Husayn (The Influence of the Element of Enjoining the Good in the Movement of Imam .(Husayn) (۱۳۶۰/۱۹۸۱

(no fear, nor shall they grieve.”(۶:۴۷

When the warning of the prophets takes hold of the mind, and the spirit gains ascendancy over the self, red lights are seen illuminating the darkness of the sinful soul, warning of the dangers of preoccupations with the consumption of the things of .this world, of envy, lust and greed and baseless pride

This red light is seen by those who tread the spiritual path,(۱) but its significance is not limited to any specific group. In its most extreme form the red light is plain. It is the .blood of the martyrs

The mystics explain redness as the result of the mixing of the whiteness of the spirit or intellect with the darkness of the soul, as the harvest moon appears red through (the darkness of the earth's atmosphere although its light is white.(۲

So too, the red lights of warning that have been the topic of our discussion represent the intrusion of the enlightened intellect into the darkness of social evil and political corruption. The spirit revolts against the darkness of depravity by enjoining the good and forbidding evil. The intellect issues red warnings of admonition and protest. It

.rises up over the night of oppression like a huge red harvest moon

Martyrdom is a red light. It warns of corporate evil as it calls by example for the ultimate renunciation of all wickedness. The blood of Imam Husayn is a crimson beacon that shines through history to warn that even in the name of the

p: ۲۱۲

See Najm al-Din Razi, The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return, tr. Hamid -۱
.Algar (Delmar: Caravan Books, ۱۹۸۲), p. ۳۰۰¬-۳۰۱

See Suhravardi's "Aql-e Surkh" in vol. ۳ of his collected works, ed. Seyyed Hossein -۲
.Nasr (Tehran: Anjuman-e Shahanshahi Falsafah-ye Iran, ۱۹۷۷), p. ۲۲۸

.highest ideals, the worst atrocities may be committed

At the same time, it calls for the greatest sacrifice in the struggle for justice. This is what is demanded by the red intellect of Imam Husayn ,not a decision procedure according to some legal formula, but an invitation to reflect upon the wise choices made in exceedingly complex circumstances by the prophets and Imams, peace be with them all, in their struggle against evil, so that we, too, may gain insight into the .moral dilemmas which face us in the radiance of their red lights

The Islamic Righting Of Human Rights

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

O you who believe! be careful of (your duty to) Allah with the care which is due to Him,“ (and do not die unless you are Muslims.” (۳:۱۰۲

The term 'right' is not found in the Qur'an with the modern sense of the 'rights of man', 'consumer rights', and even 'animal rights', that pepper the newspapers of our cities. The sense of 'right' in Islamic sources, the Qur'an and ahadith, is of what is due .to one or is befitting because of the harmonious hierarchical order of the universe

This is the sense of 'right' in which it is God's right that He be feared, and this is also

the sense of 'right' employed in the essay attributed to Imam Sajjad (as) , Risalah al-Huquq (The Treatise on Rights):(۱)

The greatest of God's rights against you is the right which He has made incumbent

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۱- -The translation is included as an appendix to William C. Chittick's translation of Al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah, The Psalms of Islam (London: Muhammadi Trust, ۱۹۸۷), ۲۷۹-۲۹۲.

upon you for Himself and which is the root of all rights, then those which He has made incumbent upon you in yourself, from your crown to your foot, in keeping with the diversity of your organs. He has given your tongue a right against you, your hearing a right against you, your sight a right against you, your hand a right against you, your leg a right against you, your stomach a right against you, and your private part a right against you. These are the seven organs through which acts take place.

Then He gave your acts rights against you: He gave your ritual prayer a right against you, your fasting a right against you, your charity a right against you, your offering a right against you, and your acts a right against you.

Then these rights extend out from you to others who have rights against you. The most incumbent of them against you are the rights toward your leaders, then the rights toward your subjects, then the rights toward your relatives.(۱)

One of the major challenges posed by the modern Western world for the Islamic world pertains to the issue of rights, particularly, human rights. In what follows, I would like to consider the nature of this challenge and reflect upon how the religious orientation of Islam may provide guidance for the articulation of a response.

The challenge is moral as well as political. The foreign policy of the US during the last decades of the twentieth century has focused

.Ibid., ۲۸۲ -۱

on the issues of human rights and democratization. Of course, US policy has not been .consistent in this regard

As Samuel P. Huntington remarks, the 'paradox of democracy' has weakened the will of the West to promote democracy in the post-Cold War world. By the 'paradox of democracy,' Huntington means that democratically elected governments in non-Western societies may reject Western political domination and refuse to cooperate :with Western policy initiatives. Huntington writes

The West was relieved when the Algerian military intervened in ۱۹۹۲ and canceled the election which the fundamentalist FIS clearly was going to win. Western governments also were reassured when the fundamentalist Welfare Party in Turkey and the nationalist BJP in India were excluded from power after scoring electoral victories in ۱۹۹۵ and ۱۹۹۶. On the other hand, within the context of its revolution Iran in some respects has one of the more democratic regimes in the Islamic world, and competitive elections in many Arab countries including Saudi Arabia and Egypt would almost surely produce governments far less sympathetic to Western interests than (their undemocratic predecessors.(۱

However, despite the inconsistencies in Western policies, it remains the case that Western governments continue to lean heavily on human rights to justify their policies. The inconsistencies mentioned by Huntington are really a distraction, for they invite an ad hominem response that fails to address the deeper moral issues raised by .the challenge of human rights

The moral challenge may be posed by those opposed to Islam as a condemnation of Islam itself: since

Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World -۱ .Order (New York: Simon Schuster, ۱۹۹۷), ۱۹۸

human rights are trampled by Islamic governments, there is something morally lacking in Islam.

A rather superficial sort of response is to be found in the claim that violations of human rights occur no more frequently in societies with Islamic governments than in societies governed by secularist regimes. This response is superficial because it seems to accept the presumption that respect for human rights may be used as a moral criterion by which to justify the condemnation of a religion.

Another sort of response is also unsatisfying: the concept of human rights is foreign to Islam, so all value judgments made on the basis of human rights are to be rejected as unIslamic. This response is unsatisfying because the consequent does not follow from the antecedent. It is salutary to understand why the entailment does not hold.

First, I should explain what I mean by saying that the concept of human rights is foreign to Islam. Actually, it would be more appropriate to speak of a family of concepts of human rights, because moral and political theorists in the West have developed differing concepts of rights about which there is considerable controversy.

However, these concepts have a shared history with roots in Roman jurisprudence and Stoic natural law theory. The concepts that developed in the West from these roots, through Ockham, Hobbes and Locke, to contemporary theorists, such as Wellman, Nozick and Raz, have, until very recently, been completely isolated from comparable ideas discussed in the intellectual world of Islam.

Since

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Western ideas of human rights only became familiar in the Islamic world with the constitutional movements of the nineteenth century, and since the concepts dominating contemporary political discussions of human rights in international forums are grounded in Western traditions of political thought, it is fair to say that the concept of human rights is foreign to Islam.

From this it does not follow that all value judgments made on the basis of human rights should be considered unIslamic, if by unIslamic we refer to that which conflicts .with the doctrines and values of Islam

Some judgments made on the basis of unIslamic systems of thought may be in agreement with Islam. For instance, one may arrive at the judgment that the poor should be helped on the basis of Marxism, Buddhism or Islam; in fact, this is such a trite judgment (although no less important for being trite) that it would be hard to find a system of thought with serious numbers of adherents that did not agree with .helping the poor

So, we have to be careful to distinguish the conceptual systems in the context of which value judgments arise from those value judgments themselves. The refutation of a conceptual system is not sufficient to refute the truth of the judgments based .upon it

In order to refute those judgments, one must bring reasons against them from the conceptual resources one accepts. This is why much, but far from all, of what is (contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights(١

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١ - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted without dissent by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December ١٠, ١٩٤٨

has been condoned by Muslim thinkers, and restated in the Islamic Declaration of (Human Rights.(١

Despite the possibility of agreement about judgments originating from totally different conceptual perspectives, there is a danger that unconscious conceptual leakage can take place when the agreement, and even disagreement, about .particular judgments is articulated

Perhaps it can be of assistance to consider a medical prohibition given by a physician

to his patient against eating pork because of its high cholesterol content. Suppose the .patient is a Muslim and refrains from pork because of the religious sanction

The doctor and his patient agree on the judgment that pork is to be avoided, but the conceptual systems upon which the judgment is based are very different. It may be a point of fact that the Muslim's diet is low in cholesterol even if it is not a matter of .principle

The concept of the low-cholesterol diet is foreign to Islam, as the concept of ritual impurity (nijasah) is foreign to modern medicine. Of course, the situation with regard to rights is more complicated than this. To explore the complications, we need to have .a clear picture of the Western concept of human rights

In his Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice,(۲)Jack Donnelly provides a concise lucid account of the modern Western concept of rights, and of human rights in .particular

In modern legal theory, there is a huge difference between saying that it is right for A to have x, and saying that A has a right

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۱ - The Islamic Conference ratified an Islamic Declaration of Human Rights in December ۱۹۸۹ in Tehran, and then finalized it at a meeting in Cairo. See Muhammad 'Ali Taskhiri, "The Analysis and Development of the Concept of Human Rights," .Message of Thaqalayn, vol. ۳, No. ۴, Winter ۱۹۹۸, ۶۱-۷۴

۲ - Jack Donnelly, Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice, (Ithaca: Cornell, .(۱۹۹۳

to but the difference, according to rights theorists, need not show up as a difference in extension, that is, it may turn out to be the case that for all x, it is right for A to have .x if and only if A has a right to x

The difference, rather, concerns the force of the claim, procedures of enforcement

and the special social practices brought into play by the rights claim. The special force of the rights claim, according to Ronald Dworkin,(۱) derives from the fact that they trump other sorts of considerations, such as utility, that is, rights are normally considered to be inviolable, and they cannot be swept aside for the sake of political or .social exigency

Secondly, one who makes a rights claim initiates a procedure through which the violation of rights is to be redressed and through which procedures are to be .established for the protection of those rights

Human rights are extralegal rights that ground moral claims made on political systems to establish legal entitlements for individuals. Human rights are held to arise from the essential moral nature of man, (according to the International Human Rights ".Covenants) from "the inherent dignity of the human person

Donnelly writes, "Human rights represent a social choice of a particular moral vision of human potentiality, which rests on a particular substantive account of the minimum (requirements of a life of dignity."(۲

Human rights are rights of individual human persons. Families, corporations, nations (and peoples have no human rights.(۳

p: ۲۱۹

Ronald Dworkin, Taking Rights Seriously (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, - ۱ .(۱۹۷۷

Donnelly, ۱۷ -۲

However, there are recent official statements holding the right to self-- - ۳ determination to be a human right of states. See U.N.documents number E/CN.۴/۱۹۸۷/SR.۱۰, pp. ۷ (Ukraine) and ۱۰ (Cuba); ibid., SR.۱۱, pp. ۱۳ (U.S.S.R.) and ۱۴ .(Morocco); and ibid.,SR.۱۴, p. ۵ (Argentina), cited in Donnelly, p. ۱۴۸, fn. ۳

Human rights, however, can be, and typically are, claimed against institutions rather than individuals, although human rights claims against individuals are also made.

Those against whom human rights claims are rightly made have a duty to provide for .those rights

Although the modern Western concept of human rights arises from a concept of human dignity and the duties which must be carried out to ensure respect for that dignity, we must be careful to distinguish recognition of dignity based duties from .recognition of human rights

A moral person may consider it a personal duty to assist a beggar because of the human dignity of the beggar, and he may accept that he is duty bound to tell the truth because this is required by the human dignity of those who listen to him, yet his assistance and truth telling is not a response to a human rights claim on the part of the beggar, the listener or anyone else, because there is no question here of entitlement, of the inviolability of this duty in the face of moral conflict, or of the initiation of procedures of redress by the persons to whom those having the duty in .question may be obliged

While it is typical among Muslim writers on human rights to attempt to show how various human rights established by modern conventions may be supported by religious sources, these writers tend to ignore the specific philosophical foundations of human rights concepts, and the differences between recognition of rights and recognition

:of duties. Donnelly writes

Many authors even argue that contemporary human rights doctrines merely replicate ۱,۴۰۰year-old Islamic ideas.... But these claims prove to be almost entirely without basis.... Muslims are regularly and forcefully enjoined to treat their fellow men with respect and dignity, but the bases for these injunctions are divine commands that establish only duties, not human rights.... In Islam, in the realm of human rights (read: human dignity) what matters is duty rather than rights. And whatever rights do exist is a consequence of one's status or actions, not the simple fact that one is a human

being.... One might even argue that "there is no aspect of human need but Islam, in its ethical, social and liturgical precepts, has made provision for it" (Tabandeh ۱۹۷۰: ۱۰). The social and political precepts of Islam do reflect a strong concern for human good and human dignity. Such a concern is important in itself, and even a prerequisite for human rights notions. But it is in no way equivalent to a concern for, or recognition of, human rights.(۱)

So, it seems that we have a huge number of Muslim authors who do not distinguish between deserving x and having a right to x, and who claim that important human rights are recognized in Islam.

The question for these authors then becomes one of sorting out the differences between what rights humans have according to Islam and what rights they have according to Western liberal theories. Tabandeh, for example, is careful to

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۱- Donnelly, ۵۱-۵۲. The reference to Tabandeh is Sultanhussein Tabandeh, A Muslim Commentary on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (London: F. T. Goulding and Company, ۱۹۷۰).

point out that many rights accorded to women by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must be rejected or modified to conform to Islamic law, but it is assumed that there is recognition of rights in Islamic law.

If, as Donnelly claims, there is no recognition of human rights in Islamic law, why do so many Muslim authors mistakenly assume the contrary? Donnelly himself suggests one reason: "The social and political precepts of Islam do reflect a strong concern for human good and human dignity." Another reason is that in traditional Islamic jurisprudence we do find the expressions Haqq Allah and Haqq al-'abd or Haqq al-nass, which are naturally translated as 'the right of Allah' and 'the right of the servant' or 'right of the people.'

While these expressions do not allude to the Western concept of a right, but rather to

what is due to God or a person because of the stipulations of religious law, nevertheless they facilitate the assimilation of the Western concept of rights to Islamic culture. Take, for example, the right to life. Recognition of the moral right to life in the context of Western culture is taken to justify the enactment of legal .entitlements and protections together with procedures of redress

Cases in which killing is held to be justified, such as war, capital punishment and abortion, must be demonstrated to be warranted exceptions to the general prohibition against killing that follows from this right. The reasoning in Islamic jurisprudence takes a reverse course, that

is, the jurist begins with particular statements of the Qur'an and narrations attributed to the Prophet (s) and Imams (as), and comes to the conclusion that in Islam there is a general prohibition against killing, since cases in which killing is permitted seem to .require some justification as a deviation from the general rule

On the basis of this general rule, any violation of the rule may be said to be a violation of what is due to the person, even if the matter would not normally be put this way in .traditional jurisprudence

Finally, since a general rule against killing may be taken to imply that it is due to every person not to be killed (except in cases of defense, war or capital punishment), it is natural to put this by saying that the right to life is recognized in Islam.(۱)

Donnelly would no doubt protest that the result of this process is still not the Western concept of a right to life because the Islamic right to life does not provide moral .support for the sorts of entitlements and protections found in Western law

But this is a question for Islamic legal theory. Contemporary Islamic laws contain many procedures not found in traditional shari'ah introduced in order to accord with the needs and expectations of contemporary Muslim society. There seems no reason why the recognition of Islamic rights by Muslims cannot play the role of grounding the

.sorts of legal entitlements and protections emphasized by Donnelly

In conclusion, the

See Mahdi Muntazir Qa'im, "Life and Liberty," Message of Thaqalayn, vol. ۴, No. ۱, -۱ .Spring ۱۹۹۸/۱۴۱۸, ۷۹-۱۰۲

precise concept of human rights common in the West has its own history in Western moral and political thought and has legal ramifications not found in traditional Islamic law. Nevertheless, there is fertile ground in contemporary Islamic legal thought for the development of Islamic theories of rights with similar sorts of legal implications to .those emphasized by Donnelly

So, even if Donnelly is right to claim that Islam does not contain within its traditions the Western concept of human rights, it is consistent with the introduction of a human .rights concept analogous to that common in the West

This consistency helps to explain why so many Muslim authors have attempted to show how to derive various rights from Islamic sources, and why the Islamic .Conference has been willing to draw up its own declaration of rights

Donnelly draws the conclusion that in Islam, there is no concern for or recognition of human rights because he is careful enough to notice the differences between the peculiarities of the Western concept of rights and the moral categories enshrined in .traditional Islamic law

These differences are important and often overlooked, not only by those who seek to defend Islam by showing how Islamic rights can be derived, but also by liberals who .argue for the universal applicability of human rights

Perhaps the most important American political philosopher of the twentieth century is John Rawls, and the concept of rights is central to his liberal theory of justice. In his Oxford Amnesty lecture of ۱۹۹۳, Rawls argues

that the concept of rights he has defended is not peculiar to the liberal tradition, but that any well-ordered non liberal society must honor basic human rights.(۱)

Given the peculiarities of the Western concept of human rights, Rawls' claim is astonishing. Certainly it would seem plausible to acknowledge the possibility of a well-ordered non liberal society in which there are universal obligations and legal protections but from which the specific concept of human rights with all its legal ramifications is notably absent.

Indeed, it would seem that this was the sort of society to which many people aspired in the medieval period, whether Christian or Muslim.

Rawls begins by stating three requirements for a well-ordered non liberal society: (۱) it must be peaceful and gain its legitimate aims through diplomacy and trade; (۲) the system of law must be sincerely and not unreasonably believed to be guided by a common good conception of justice, taking into account people's essential interests and imposing moral duties and obligations on all members of society; (۳) it must respect basic human rights.

Rawls claims that the third requirement follows from the second as follows:

The argument for this conclusion [i.e., that a well-ordered non liberal society must respect human rights] is that the second requirement rules out violations of these rights. For to satisfy it, a society's legal order must impose moral duties and obligations on all persons in its territory and it must embody a reasonable consultation hierarchy which will protect human rights. A sincere

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۱ - John Rawls, "The Law of Peoples," in Stephen Shute and Susan Hurley, eds., On Human Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures ۱۹۹۳ (New York: Basic Books, ۱۹۹۳), ۴۱-۸۲.

and reasonable belief on the part of judges and other officials that the system of law

is guided by a common good conception of justice has the same result. Such a belief is simply unreasonable, if not irrational, when those rights are infringed.(۱)

Rawls makes the mistake of assuming that when rights are not infringed, they are honored or respected. This is like the mistake of one who claims that Smith respects the religious prohibition against pork, when Smith abstains from pork to keep his cholesterol count low.

Philosophers are familiar with the distinction between conforming to a rule and following a rule. An analogous distinction should be made between mere conformity with rights and respect for rights.

Conformity to rights means that the outcome of the legal, moral and social arrangements in a society is that rights are not infringed. Conformity to rights in this sense does not require possession of the concept of rights or knowledge that conformity has been achieved. Obviously, there need be no conscious desire to conform.

Conformity to rights does not imply anything about the concepts involved in maintaining this conformity; it merely implies the absence of violations. To honor rights, however, as distinct from just conforming to them, one must be conscious of rights as such, that is, one must employ the concept of rights.

This requires more than a mere absence of violations. To honor rights is to conform to rights intentionally, to conform to rights by trying to conform to them, to conform

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۱- Rawls, ۶۳.

to rights because of acting on the basis of a desire to achieve conformity.(۱)

The sort of protection of human rights required of a well-ordered non liberal society by Rawls' argument is nothing more than conformity to human rights, or an ideal absence of violations. But violations of human rights may be avoided without any

conscious employment of the concept of human rights in the precise sense discussed by liberal theorists. One may be horrified by torture and live in a society in which torture is effectively prohibited without seeing torture as a violation of human rights.

The effective prohibition of torture in a society does not require the currency of a human rights concept in that society. So, Rawls is plainly mistaken when he jumps from the need for protection of human rights in a well-ordered non liberal society to the conclusion that human rights must be honored in such societies.

Rawls' mistake is like the mistake attributed by Donnelly to Muslims who find a basis for human rights in Islam. The fact that many human rights are protected by Islamic law does not entail that Islamic law respects these human rights, because the precise concept of a human right with the legal ramifications of rights claims in modern Western societies is strikingly absent from traditional Islamic law.

Of course, Muslims are free to adapt and modify the Western concept of human rights in such a way as to become consistent with the teachings and rulings of Islam, and

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۱- This paragraph is modeled on Philip Pettit's explanation of the difference between conformity to a rule and following a rule in his article, "Problem of Rule-Following," in Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa, eds., A Companion to Epistemology, (Oxford: Blackwell, ۱۹۹۲), ۳۸۸.

the concept of Islamic rights might then play a legitimate role in the formulation of civil law in Muslim societies, expositions of Islamic international law, and Islamic versions of what Rawls calls 'the law of peoples'.(۱)

Muslims are driven in this direction by Western accusations that there is no respect for human rights in Islam. It is difficult for Muslims to disagree with the concept of human rights without being accused of condoning violations of human rights.

Violations of many human rights are so abhorrent that it is quite natural for Muslims to respond to criticism by pointing out that such violations are as inconsistent with the .moral and political values of Islam as they are inconsistent with liberal values

From here, it is aver y short step to the adaptation of the concept of rights with .various modifications to bring the concept into conformity with Islamic thought

Traditionalists might respond with a wholesale rejection of the concept of rights as foreign to Islam. This seems somewhat of an overreaction. Even if the concept of rights is not to be found in medieval formulations of Islamic law, this does not mean that a contemporary jurist will not be able to derive an Islamic concept of rights .consistent with the religious sources

There is a need for caution here. The result of the widespread introduction of a concept of rights analogous to the Western concept but based on Islamic sources may be insidious in its own way. When the concept of rights gains

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۱- By the law of peoples I mean a political conception of right and justice that applies" to the principles and norms of international law and practice." Rawls, ۴۲.

common currency in the political discourse of a society, this has profound effects on the ways in which people think about morals, law, the self and society, and the .relations among them

Muslims need to begin to consider whether these changes are in harmony with the basic values of Islam. Even if the concept of rights can be completely Islamized, when the language of rights is used in international political forums there will be a tendency to assimilate the Islamic concept to the accepted usage governing the Western liberal .concept

Although the contemporary Western liberal concept of rights is typically traced to the eighteenth century, particularly to the American and French revolutions, it is only in

the last thirty or forty years that rights have come to dominate social-political thought .in the West

Indeed, this domination has reached the extent that virtually all political claims today are made in terms of rights. Arguments against interference by others are made as .claims that we have a right that protects us from such interference

Arguments in favor of interference with actions undertaken by others are made as claims that those actions result in a violation of our rights. Those who smoke claim that laws against smoking violate their rights to pursue happiness by smoking. Those who do not smoke claim that smokers violate their rights to fresh air. The resolution of such conflicting rights claims requires moral argument that is often lacking because .rights claims come to be seen as fundamental

When rights are taken

to be fundamental, political discourse becomes extremist and fanatical. There is no room for argument when competing rights claims are taken to express basic rights. Liberals might be surprised to find themselves accused by Muslims of fanaticism and extremism, but Islam provides a framework for thinking about the law in terms of the sorts of textual support needed to back a legal decision, and the ways in which rational considerations must be assessed. Islamic rights claims can never be taken as .absolute and fundamental

If political controversy among Muslims is put in the language of Islamic values, scholars can debate relative priorities and importance of various particular rulings .and judgments in an attempt to formulate policies most harmonious with Islam

The introduction of the language of rights, however, even Islamic rights, will have a tendency to stifle debate, because it is assumed that rights are (nearly) irrevocable. Without the doctrine that rights are inviolate, or nearly so, the authority of rights in contemporary Western political discourse would evaporate, for it is by reason of their

inviolability that rights provide such a strong advantage to those who are recognized to possess them.

One contemporary critic of liberalism, Ronald Beiner, suggests that "we should consider dispensing with the whole language of rights, for it is simply that way of speaking about what is politically desirable that disposes us to assert claims that are taken as absolute and inviolate."(١)

Beiner continues by pointing out another disadvantage of rights that might make Muslims want to

p: ٢٣٠

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١ – Ronald Beiner, What's the Matter with Liberalism? (Berkeley: University of California Press, ١٩٩٢), ٩١.

hesitate about wholesale adoption of the concept of rights:

A further drawback of the rhetoric of rights discourse is that all rights, as rights, tend to be treated as occupying an equal level, in abstraction from the heterogeneous and differentiated considerations that lead us to describe something as good or as advantageous. The attraction of this rhetoric, indeed, lies precisely in its abstractness, its lack of differentiation with regard to the substance of various entitlements (we might call it the leveling effect).. Rather than inquiring into what is actually at stake in a given argument, the very fact that a supposed right is in jeopardy introduces an extra measure of passion and intemperance into the debate, regardless of what is being debated. This problem derives from the formalism of rights discourse, in contrast to the substantive character of deliberation conducted in the language of good.(١)

Rights are taken to be inviolable, or nearly inviolable. Considerations of utility or the needs of the community as a whole are supposed to be trumped by rights claims. Since individuals make rights claims against institutions, the result is a tendency toward individualism.

Even if it is legitimate to identify the rights given to individuals by Islam, a political discourse dominated by such rights claims would still be unbalanced from the point of view of Islam because it would place community interests at lower priority without scriptural justification. It is worthy of note that Hegel also objected to the individualist .tendency of rights claims

Not only does

p: ۲۳۱

.Ibid., ۹۱-۹۲ -۱

the contemporary political discourse of competing rights claims promote individualism, it promotes a perception of the citizenry as a body of competing claimants for the recognition of conflicting rights. In fact, individuals usually do not advance rights claims alone, but as members of interest groups. Each group pursues its interests through the advancement of rights claims as inviolable or nearly .inviolable

This makes compromise or an attempt to find a solution best for all competing parties detestable to those who consider their rights to be infringed. The climate of political debate thus becomes adversarial and confrontational. The courts become mired in the adjudication of competing rights claims as each group pursues its own interests in .the attempt to win favorable interpretations of the law

This has profound effects on the tone of social-political intercourse. As Muslims embrace Islamized rights, we need to ask whether the sort of polity that will emerge .from competing claims to Islamic rights accords with the values promoted by Islam

Rights are valued because they protect interests. As different groups in society organize to compete for winning their conflicting interests, rights come to be viewed as goods to be divided among the competitors. Just as scarcity provides the occasion for programs of distributive justice with respect to material goods, conflict provides .the occasion for programs of distributive justice with regard to rights

Rights cannot be given freely to all who claim them because rights conflict. Not all claims to rights can be honored. As a result, those who

p: ۲۳۲

seek to win them consider rights to be goods that can and should be distributed by the state. The sort of attitude produced seems incompatible with the reliance on God .emphasized in Islam

Muslims should not look to the state as the means for the solution of all their problems. The attitude of the pious Muslim should be one of trust in God and submission to His will. Muslims tend to conform to human rights because this is required of them by Islam, but the dominant consideration of the pious (mutaqi) is .care to see to it that duties are performed

By contrast, the attitude of the Westerner who seeks to advance his own interests .with claims to a corresponding right seems selfish, or at least self-centered

The idea that there are some things that are due to one by right is not foreign to Islamic law. As mentioned earlier, the expressions Haqq Allah (the right of Allah) and Haqq al-'abd (the right of the servant) or Haqq al-nass (right of the people) do occur in medieval texts of Islamic jurisprudence, and modern Muslim defenders of the idea that Islam contains its own concept of rights often make reference to these (expressions.(۱

But what is meant by these terms is what is due to Allah or a person according to Islamic law. For example, the paying of fi(riyah at the end of Ramagan is the right of God, and the right an heir has to his inheritance is an instance of the right

p: ۲۳۳

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۱ - See "Human Rights" by Ann Elizabeth Mayerin John L. Esposito,ed., The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World (New York: Oxford University Press, ۱۹۹۵). ۱۴۳-۱۴۸. Also see Ann Mayer, Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics (Boulder:

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of the servant, but the term right (�aqq) is not used here in the modern sense of rights as moral trumps on the basis of which legal arguments and proceedings can be initiated. The point is not a mere quibble over words. Someone might object by saying, "OK. I admit that there is this narrow technical sense of rightcurrent in Western political philosophy, and that this concept is foreign to Islam. But there is a broader, more inclusive sense of right, in which we can say that the sorts of entitlements that are the subject of discussion by Western theorists and those protected by Islamic law are both rights. Why insist on the narrow meaning, especially given the fact that in discussions of rights among Muslims, this narrow meaning does not seem to be intended." We cannot simply muddle along with a sloppy inclusive meaning because the meaning of human rightsdominant in international political discussion is the Western liberal one. It is this notion that is used when mention is made of human rights organizations, when various governments are censured because of their poor human rights records, and when

Western governments claim to be promoting human rights through their foreign .policies

Muslims do a disservice to their own societies and to Islamic law if they try to fend off objections to their human rights records by answering the charges against them with the claim that they are proponents of Islamic human rights. Consider, for example, .the problem of child labor

Human rights organizations condemn governments for permitting child labor with the charge that the rights of the children are being violated.If we respond by saying that the Islamic concept of human rights does not provide for any right violated by child labor, we give the impression that in our view, there is nothing wrong with it, and implicitly we endorse the idea that the sole standard of just government is the protection of human rights, albeit,Islamic human rights. On the other hand, the very same impression is made by the response that the Islamic concept of human rights

does contain protections against child labor. It does not matter very much whether we insist that the philosophy behind Western liberal human rights is very different from that supporting Islamic conceptions of human rights, whether the basis for rights is in human nature or divine justice and compassion or both or neither. No matter which of the responses mentioned is presented, the political discourse of rights is endorsed, and since this discourse is dominated byWestern liberal conceptions of rights together with the adversarial use of rights claims, the way is opened for the encroachment of liberal political culture in Islamic thought.This is the .mechanism by which cultural invasion takes place

More importantly, the Islamizing of human rights concepts shifts the focus of attention from the victims of practices often forbidden by Islam to debates over which rights deserve the Islamic stamp of approval and debates over humanism and theologically oriented philosophies. The poverty

p: ۲۳۵

and masses of uneducated people in their societies certainly is no less distressing to Muslims than to Western advocates of human rights. Often, however, even the best Islamic government is simply unable eradicate these problems. Muslims, in concert with their religious and governmental institutions, need to develop strategies to combat the offenses against God's law that take place in their societies. They do not need the distraction of diplomatic, economic and military pressure to adopt the general program of Western liberal human rights. Such pressure really is cultural imperialism, although it seems to be accepted as morally permissible even by such .sensitive thinkers as Rawls, Donnelly and way too many others to mention

The real need is to develop Islamic norms and institutionalized procedures to protect them. The Muslim family needs protection from erosion no less than the poor and .underprivileged in Muslim societies need protection from legal abuses

It is time to admit that we have not yet discovered an effective strategy for the .implementation of Islamic law and the protection of Islamic values in modern society

This should not be cause for shame or embarrassment, unless Muslims react by either closing their eyes to the difficulties they face or abandoning divine guidance in favor of the ways of the West, may Allah protect us from these twin devils: the failure to recognize our own shortcomings and the attempt to remove our shortcomings by casting aside what God has given us.

In conclusion, I would suggest that Muslims eschew the language

of human rights because:

(۱) it invites the evaluation of Islam according to the standards of the Western liberal tradition, (۲) it smuggles concepts from the Western liberal tradition into the political discourse of Muslims, (۳) it promotes litigious adversarial competition among various interest groups in society, (۴) it fosters the idea that it is the responsibility of the state to satisfy individual interests through the distribution of rights, (۵) it stifles balanced consideration of community and institutional values in favor of insistence on individual freedoms, (۶) it stifles reasoned political discussion because it presupposes that rights must be nearly absolute and fundamental, (۷) when Muslim intellectuals glorify the 'Islamic human rights' protected by traditional Islamic law,(۱) this belies the need for the development of legal procedures and protections in modern Muslim societies to prevent abuses and injustices that were never imagined by medieval fuqaha, so that instead of genuine ijtihad on the new problems, Western solutions are simply adopted without comment, (۸) it shifts attention from the need to take steps to eliminate injustice to differences over which rights are to be recognized and the philosophical foundations of rights.

At the same time that I advocate rejection of the language of human rights, I call on Muslims to resist Western claims to the universality of human rights, claims for which serious theorists have failed to provide serious arguments.

Muslim resistance to these claims requires a greater familiarity on the part of Muslims with Western rights theories in social-political philosophy as

۱- As in the essays on rights in Islam by Tuhami Negra (Tunis) and 'Abd al-'Aziz Kamil (Cairo and Kuwait) in A. Boudhiba, ed., The Different Aspects of Islamic Culture: The Individual and Society in Islam (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, ۱۹۹۸).

well as jurisprudence. To counter the Western political pressure for the enforcement of human rights, Muslims need to stand strong and ready to defend Islamic values, but at the same time, greater efforts must be made to explain Islamic thought about rights in the West.

These comments may be considered rejectionist or anti-modernist, but on the other hand, I advocate the recognition of deficiencies in traditional Islamic law for dealing with modern problems, particularly with regard to how to control the nation state, how social institutions independent of the state may function in Islamic society, and how to deal with such mundane problems as widespread unemployment, educational deficiencies and widespread poverty.

While liberals would introduce the machinery of Western human rights to deal with these problems, and traditionalists seem to think medieval Islamic legal rulings are sufficient for the task, I suggest that more work needs to be done to find solutions to contemporary problems consonant with the teachings and values of Islam.

Traditional legal procedures are not sufficient for this task. Although I urge resistance against Western pressures to adopt the program of liberal human rights, I also recognize the benefit to be gained through cooperation with some international human rights advocacy groups to develop strategies for the elimination of injustices recognized as such by Muslims and liberals alike.

The struggle against injustice must be so prominent among Muslims that they become famous for such concerns; for it is only in this way that we can hope to provide

.the religious moral conscience so much needed in today's world

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وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ

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هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ

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مِلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

ۚ

هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَٰذَا لِيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ

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فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا

الزَّكَاةَ وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِاللَّهِ هُوَ مَوْلَاكُمْ

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فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلَىٰ وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ

And strive hard in (the way of) Allah, (such) a striving a is due to Him; He has chosen“ you and has not laid upon you an hardship in religion; the faith of your father Ibrahim; He named you Muslims before and in this, that the Messenger may be a bearer of witness to you, and you may be bearers of witness to the people; therefore keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and hold fast by Allah; He is your Guardian; how (excellent the Guardian and how excellent the Helper!” (٢٢:٧٨

?Considering Whose Justice? Which Rationality

point

Alasdair MacIntyre's Whose Justice? Which Rationality?(۱) Is an important book, a book with which Muslims, in particular, need to become acquainted. The author, Alasdair MacIntyre, is one of the most profound and most controversial moralists and social thinkers of our time.

The book, Whose Justice? Which Rationality? is not an easy work. It requires some familiarity with various details of Western culture, in particular its moral and political philosophies. So, rather than merely summarize the work, I will try to show why I think it is important for Muslim thinkers to read and criticize it.

For this

۱- (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, ۱۹۸۸).

purpose I begin with a general discussion of the work's importance in the context of MacIntyre's other writings, and then turn to two of the major topics discussed in the work, relativism and liberalism, and the related issues of religion and historicism. Along the way I offer some humble criticisms of my own, and suggestions for further research.

Of all those who have stood against the currents of modernism, Alasdair MacIntyre stands out as the philosopher who has offered the most profound critique. Born in ۱۹۲۹ in Glasgow, Scotland, he has taught at Leeds University, University College, Oxford, the University of Essex, Boston

University, Vanderbilt University and the University of Notre Dame, has written ten books, has edited important anthologies, and has authored about two hundred articles and book reviews. His After virtue, which was first published in ۱۹۸۱, sent shock waves through the Western intellectual world.(۱) He committed what for many was an unforgivable sin when he claimed that the project of the Enlightenment period of European thought was a failure.

This rejection of modernist thinking was focused upon moral philosophy, but it attracted the attention of a readership much wider than what could be expected for a book in ethics. There were even articles in the popular press about the revival of Aristotelian thought initiated by MacIntyre's work, and in the article on the history of twentieth century Anglo-American Ethics in the Encyclopedia of Ethics, Alan Donaganpredicts that MacIntyre's attention to Thomistic thought will influence the philosophical work

p: ۲۴۰

Alasdair MacIntyre, After virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, ۲nd edition (Notre Dame: -۱ University of Notre Dame Press, ۱۹۸۴). The translation of this work into Farsi by Shomali and Shahriari is at press. A lengthy serialized review by the translators continues to appear in Ma'rifat. The translation of Whose Justice? Which Rationality? Into Farsi by Mustafa Malikiyan is also at press at the time of this writing (November .(۱۹۹۹

(to be done in the twenty-first century.(۱)

MacIntyre's work has also sparked controversy among political theorists and social critics, as well as professional philosophers.(۲) Conferences have been convened to discuss his ideas, critical studies of his work have been compiled, and several of his .books and articles have been translated into foreign languages

In the field of ethics, MacIntyre has spawned a revival of interest in Aristotelian ethics with such force that it is now generally recognized as serious rival to the two major strands of moral philosophy that have been dominant in the West since the .Enlightenment: utilitarianism and Kantianism

Numerous books and articles have been written since the publication of after virtue proclaiming the advantages of an Aristotelian virtue ethics over utilitarian .consequentialism and Kantian deontology

In political theory, there has been a steady stream of writings in which liberalism is

defended against MacIntyre's criticisms, or elaborating those criticisms, often in the form of a communitarian theory which MacIntyre himself has repudiated.(۳)

In religious thought, MacIntyre's work has prompted a renewed interest in Neo-Thomism, especially as it is related to ethics and social political thought.

MacIntyre's emphasis on the importance of history has also led to heated discussions in which he has often been accused of being a relativist. It was largely in response to this sort of misunderstanding, subsequent to the publication of after virtue, that MacIntyre wrote the sequel, Whose Justice? Which Rationality? MacIntyre's rejections of historicism and relativism in this latter work have also contributed to the depth of

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۱- Lawrence Becker, ed. Encyclopedia of Ethics (New York: Garland, ۱۹۹۲), ۵۴۳.

۲- See Peter McMylor, Alasdair MacIntyre: Critic of Modernity (London: Routledge, ۱۹۹۴), and After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre, ed., John Horton and Susan Mendus (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press,۱۹۹۴).

۳- Communitarians emphasize the importance of reference to one's community in accounts of the self, moral agency and practical reasoning, and they advocate a politics designed to nourish the community and its values at the expense of individual autonomy and liberal rights. More will be said about MacIntyre's rejection of communitarianism later in this review.

the discussions of these issues.

So, one reason for reading MacIntyre is because his work has been tremendously influential, even among those who disagree with his positions. Another reason would be interest in the topics he discusses: history, politics, ethics, religion, epistemology, philosophy in general and the relations among them. For Muslims, however, there are additional reasons to read MacIntyre.

One of the most important issues in Islamic social and political thought since the nineteenth century has been the confrontation of traditional Muslim societies with

European modernism and one of the most important facets of modernism about which Muslim thinkers are concerned is that of political liberalism. Muslims who argue that liberal ideals and institutions are compatible with Islam are usually classified as modernists. At the other extreme are those who would claim that liberal and Islamic .thought agree on nothing

The vast majority of Muslim intellectuals and scholars, however, fall somewhere between these extremes. The interesting discussion in contemporary Muslim social thought is not over whether modernists or conservatives hold a more defensible position, but what aspects of liberal thought may be accommodated and what .aspects must be rejected

MacIntyre's writings are interesting in this context because, like many Muslims, he is very strongly opposed to many aspects of modernism and liberalism for what turn out to be ultimately religious reasons.Furthermore, the philosophical perspective he seeks to defend, a form of Neo-Thomism with a strong emphasis on Aristotle, is more similar to the philosophical perspective of traditional Islamic thought

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than are any of the other major tendencies to be found among contemporary .Western philosophers

Of course, there remain important differences between the attitudes of Muslims and those expressed by MacIntyre, to be discussed below, but regardless of our differences, the thought of the most profound critic of modernism and liberalism in the West should be of great interest to those who feel a need to resist the imposition of modernist and liberal thought on Muslim societies, such as those inspired by the warnings of the Grand Leader of the Islamic Revolution against the "cultural ."invasion

Muslim liberals who await a repetition of the European Enlightenment in Islamic culture would also be well advised to read MacIntyre, who has declared the Enlightenment project to be a failure and ultimately incoherent. Perhaps if Muslim modernists would read MacIntyre they would become more critical of the claims made on behalf of liberalism, and would come to recognize the need to examine the intellectual history of their own traditions, as well as those of the West, to find the way .forward

Perhaps MacIntyre's books can serve as a kind of vaccination against the infatuation .with Western culture Persians call gharbzadigi

After Virtue

The book that initially provoked the great storm of controversy was After virtue, and in order to understand the true significance of Whose Justice? Which Rationality? One .must understand something about the earlier work

After virtue begins with the 'disquieting suggestion' that moral discourse in the West has lost its meaning, that it serves as

p: ۲۴۳

a disguise for the expression of preferences, attempts to gain power, emotions and attitudes, but that it has ceased to have any relation to what is truly good or right. MacIntyre pins responsibility for the collapse of Western ethics on the Enlightenment. Much of the book goes on to criticize various aspect of Enlightenment thought in Hume, Kant, the utilitarian's, the emotivists, and in contemporary liberal political (philosophy, especially as elaborated by John Rawls.(۱

MacIntyre sees only two ways to pass beyond the errors of modernism and liberalism: either we must accept a Nietzschean nihilism or we must return to an Aristotelian ethics. However, the Aristotelian alternative is not a simple return to Greek or medieval systems of thought. For the Enlightenment criticisms of scholasticism to be successfully answered, the return must be to a reformed .Aristotelianism consonant with modern science

This means that the telos or end of man is not to be understood as determined by biology; rather it is to be fathomed by reflection on history, and the human practices and traditions that have evolved over the course of history. The second half of after virtue consists in MacIntyre's elaboration of this historically grounded Aristotelianism and its development as a theory of the virtues.

Relativism

Like the Nietzschean critics of the arrogance of the Enlightenment, MacIntyre accepts that there is no absolute standpoint from which we can arrive at absolute moral truths. Each of us must view the world from his own position in history and society.

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۱ - The most important defense of political liberalism in the twentieth century is Harvard professor John Rawls', A Theory of Justice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, ۱۹۷۱).

is this admission that led many critics of after virtue to accuse him of relativism or historicism, and it is largely in response to this criticism that Whose Justice? Which Rationality? Was written.

Unlike the Nietzscheans, or genealogists as MacIntyre refers(۱) to those often called post modernists, MacIntyre does not accept the claim that because we are bound to our finite perspectives conditioned by history and social position, we are barred from certainty or absolute truth. Rather, he holds that man has the ability to understand rival perspectives even when one cannot be translated into the idiom of the other.

On the basis of this understanding, rational evaluation and judgment can be made with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of the rival worldviews and ideologies.

MacIntyre extends this discussion in Whose Justice? Which Rationality? Beyond ethics, which was the focus of his attention in after virtue, to the very principle of

.rationality, thus bringing the insight of his ethical thought to bear on epistemology

There are two major themes developed in Whose Justice? Which Rationality?: first, there is a continuation of the critique of liberalism found in After virtue coupled with an affirmation of a religious perspective; and second, there is a rejection of relativism coupled with an insistence on the significance of historical considerations for the .adjudication of disputes across traditions

When two traditions of thought are so different that what is considered self-evident or obvious in one tradition is considered dubious or incomprehensible in the other, the very principles

p: ۲۴۵

In his Three Rival versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and - ۱ .(Tradition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, ۱۹۹۰

.of reason come under question

In contemporary Western thought, what are often considered to be principles of reason are those that have proven indispensable to the natural sciences and mathematics. If one wants to judge whether this view of rationality is correct or that, for example, found in the works of Muslim philosophers, one must be very careful to avoid begging the question by using the very principles in one's evaluation that are .under dispute

Relativists have considered such controversies to be irresolvable. They claim that we are stuck inside our own worldviews, unable to make judgments on any of them. MacIntyre distinguishes two forms of relativism, which he terms relativist and .perspectivalist

The relativist claims that there can be no rationality as such, but only rationality relative to the standards of some particular tradition. The perspectivalist claims that the central beliefs of a tradition are not to be considered as true or false, but as

providing different, complementary perspectives for envisaging the realities about .which they speak to us

MacIntyre argues that both the relativist and the perspectivalist are wrong. They are wrong because they fail to admit the absolute timeless character of the truth, and would replace truth by what is often called warranted assertibility.(۱) Instead of truth; they hold that the best we can attain is the right or warrant to assert various .statements in various circumstances

MacIntyre's solution to the problem of how to reach absolute truth from a historically limited position is that attention to

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.See MacIntyre (۱۹۸۸), ۱۶۹ -۱

history itself may reveal the superiority of one tradition over another with respect to a .given topic

To have passed through an epistemologicalcrisis successfully enables the adherents of a tradition of enquiry to rewrite its history in a more insightful way. And such a history of a particular tradition provides not only a way of identifying the continuities in virtue of which that tradition of enquiry has survived and flourished as one and the same tradition, but also of identifying more accurately that structure of justification which underpins whatever claims to truth are made within it, claims which are more .and other than claims to warranted assertibility

The concept of warranted assertibility always has application only at some particular time and place in respect of standards then prevailing at some particular stage in the development of a tradition of enquiry, and a claim that such and such is warranted assertible always, therefore, has to make implicit or explicit references to such times (and places. The concept of truth, however, is timeless.(۱

MacIntyre argues that since a tradition can fail to pull through an epistemological

crisis on its own standards, the relativist is wrong if he thinks that each tradition must always vindicate itself. MacIntyre further argues that there are cases of cultural encounter in which one must come to admit the superiority of an alien culture in some regard, because it explains why the crisis occurred and does not suffer from the same .defects present in one's own culture

It is

.MacIntyre (۱۹۸۸), ۳۶۳. ۱۳۹ MacIntyre (۱۹۸۸), ۳۶۶ -۱

in this way that the people of Rome could come to accept Christianity, and the people of Iran, Islam. Each people saw that their own traditions had reached a point of crises, a point at which further progress could only be made by the adoption of a new .religion

The relativist claims that there is no way in which a tradition can enter into rational debate with another, "But if this were so, then there could be no good reason to give (one's allegiance to the standpoint of any one tradition rather to that of any other."(۱

To the contrary, MacIntyre claims that the question of which tradition to which one is to give one's allegiance is far from arbitrary, and the intellectual struggle of all those who have changed their minds about the correctness of an intellectual or spiritual tradition is more than ample evidence that the question, “Which side are you on?" is one which requires rational evaluation, however much other factors may come into .play

Perhaps MacIntyre is reflecting here on his own brief membership in the Communist Party and subsequent rejection of Marxism and conversion to Catholicism. One who adopts an intellectual position must always ask himself if it can adequately respond to criticism, criticism that can mount to produce what may be termed an epistemological crisis. "It is in respect of their adequacy or inadequacy in their responses to (epistemological crises that traditions are vindicated or fail to be vindicated."(۲

MacIntyre also argues that the position

.MacIntyre (۱۹۸۸), ۳۶۶ -۱

.MacIntyre (۱۹۸۸), ۳۶۶ -۲

of the relativist is self-defeating. The relativist pretends to issue his challenge from a neutral ground where different traditions may be compared and truth may be proclaimed relative to each of them. But this is as much a claim to absolute truth as any other. This argument and others similar to it which are to be found in Whose Justice? Which Rationality? Have provoked penetrating criticism.

John Haldane has argued that one need not assume that there is some neutral ground from which to issue the relativist claim.(۱) Within an intellectual tradition, one may observe that there are other incommensurable traditions and decide that relativism best explains this.

MacIntyre accepts Haldane's point, admitting that the case against relativism in Whose Justice? Which Rationality? Needs to be amended. At the same time, he points out that within every major intellectual tradition; various claims are presented about morals and rationality as absolutely true.

The problem is then raised as to how this anti-relativistic commitment to truth can coexist with the recognition of rival intellectual traditions with their different standards of rationality and morality.

MacIntyre's solution is that common standards are to be sought, even where none exist, by dialectical interchange between the rival viewpoints. One tradition of inquiry will be in a position to uphold the truth of its claims against rivals in which those claims are not recognized when it develops the intellectual apparatus to explain the rival viewpoint, and why the disagreement has arisen, and why the rival is incorrect.

In other

See John Haldane, "MacIntyre's Thomist Revival: What Next?" in After MacIntyre, ۱- ۹۶-۹۹, and MacIntyre's response in the same volume, ۲۹۴-۲۹۷. Haldane is Director of the Center for Philosophy and Public Affairs at the University of St. Andrews.

words, through intellectual conflict between traditions, a tradition can vindicate itself only when it can enrich its own conceptual resources sufficiently to explain the errors of its rivals. This kind of conflict and progress is only possible when there is a commitment to finding the truth.

With relativism there can be no intellectual advancement, because there is no attempt made to adjudicate among different theoretical viewpoints, and without the attempt to reach a more comprehensive position in which truth and falsity can be distinguished, traditions cannot evolve rationally, nor can they maintain their previous truth claims.

MacIntyre sees relativism as tempting those who despair of intellectual advancement, and for the sake of intellectual advancement, he sees it as a temptation that must be avoided.

MacIntyre dismisses the perspectivalist position with the rebuff, "theirs is not so much a conclusion about truth as exclusion from it and thereby from rational debate."(۱) The perspectivalist, like the reductive religious pluralist, states that rival traditions provide different views of the same reality, and none can be considered absolutely true or false.

MacIntyre objects that the traditions really do conflict with one another, and the fact that they are rivals itself bears testimony to their substantive disagreements over what is true and false. The claim that there is no ultimate truth of the matter is really just a way of avoiding the work that needs to be done in order to determine exactly where and in what respects in each of the rival traditions the truth

.MacIntyre (۱۹۸۸), ۳۶۸ -۱

lies, and when the differences in the rivals is so deep that the very principles of rationality are called into question, the rivalry produces an epistemological crisis, but .even here, the need and duty to provide a rational evaluation of the rivals remains

MacIntyre contends that epistemological crisis occurs when different traditions with different languages confront one another. Those who learn to think in both languages come to the understanding that there are things in one language for which the other does not have the expressive resources, and thereby they discover a flaw in the .deficient tradition

In this way he shows how rational evaluation of different traditions is possible, although this evaluation itself must begin from within a specific tradition. His emphasis on the fact that the starting point of our inquiry is tradition bound is comparable to a .common theme among writers in the hermeneutic tradition, such as Gadamer

The fantasy of universal standards of reason to which all rational beings must submit by virtue of being rational has been abandoned. This separates MacIntyre from :traditional writers, as Thomas McCarthy has observed

Even arguments like Alasdair MacIntyre's for the superiority of pre-modern traditions are not themselves traditional arguments but the traditionalistic arguments of hyper-reflexive moderns.(۱)

What distinguishes MacIntyre from others who share his sensitivity to context dependency is his robust sense of the truth. The incommensurability of competing .traditions, according to MacIntyre, is not as absolute as some have imagined

Logic retains authority, even if its principles are

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۱ - Thomas McCarthy, "Philosophy and Critical Theory," in David Couzens Hoy and Thomas McCarthy, Critical Theory (Oxford: Blackwell, ۱۹۹۶), p. ۴۷. McCarthy is an

expert in contemporary German philosophy and social thought at Northwestern .University

disputed, and what is sought is truth, and although he rejects correspondence theories of truth that would pair judgments to facts (because he considers the concept of fact to be an invention of seventeenth century European thought), the (theory of truth to which he gives his allegiance is still a correspondence theory.(١

In response to a sympathetic comparison between his position and views current :among certain philosophers of science, MacIntyre objects

I had hoped that what I had said about truth in enquiry in Chapter ١٨ of Whose Justice? Which Rationality? Would have made it adequately clear that I regard any attempt to eliminate the notion of truth from that of enquiry as bound to fail. It is in part for this reason that I regard the Nietzschean tradition as always in danger of (lapsing into fatal incoherence.(٢

MacIntyre's solution to the problem of relativism is especially important for Muslims because it offers a way to break the deadlock between Muslim intellectuals who, over impressed with the intellectual traditions of the West, deny that Islam asserts any absolute truths that man is capable of grasping, and those 'ulama who insist on the self-evidence of the fundamental truths of their own traditions without seeing that such claims are ineffective against rival systems of thought in which there are .profound differences about what, if anything, is to be considered self-evident

The solution MacIntyre offers is one in which there is hope that the absolute truths of Islam can be rationally defended against

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١- See MacIntyre (١٩٨٨) ٣٥۶f.

٢- After MacIntyre, ٢٩٧-٢٩٨. Here MacIntyre is responding to the Hegel scholar, Robert Stern of the University of Sheffield.

opponents as certain, but only by developing the Islamic intellectual traditions to the

.point that they are able to explain the successes as well as the failures of their rivals

Liberalism

MacIntyre's disappointment liberalism is more extensive and more profound that that of other Western critics: more extensive because it applies to the political theories of the left and the right, more profound because it traces the failings of liberalism to its origins in the Enlightenment, and traces the injustice of the modern nation-state to its :very essence. As Ronald Beiner observes

What makes MacIntyre unique? Is that for him the problem is not merely individualism or liberalism but modernity as such. Therefore he includes even (Marxism within the scope of his critique.(۱

In some ways, MacIntyre's rejection of liberalism is similar to his rejection of relativism. Just as the relativists contradicts himself if he would proclaim the absolute truth of the proposition that there are no absolute truths, the liberal contradicts himself by proclaiming neutrality between all ideologies, when, in fact, liberalism itself .is an ideology

Liberalism is an intellectual tradition as ideological as any other, and it allows for scholarly inquiry only after initiation into accepted modes of appraisal which deny the .worth of serious challenges to liberalism itself

Just as Haldane argued that the relativist need not claim that relativism is absolutely true independent of any tradition, defenders of liberalism have responded to MacIntyre's criticism of liberalism by admitting that liberalism is an ideology, that it is not absolutely

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۱ - Ronald Beiner, What's the Matter with Liberalism? (Berkeley: University of California Press, ۱۹۹۲), ۳۵. Beiner is a political philosopher at the University of Toronto.

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In Whose Justice? Which Rationality? MacIntyre responds that liberalism is a defective and ultimately incoherent ideology. His insight into the defects of liberalism :is one that was first expressed in his first book,Marxism

An Interpretation, which was written when he was only twenty-three years old. In the revised edition of this work MacIntyre emphasizes the need for an ideology on the scale of Christianity or Marxism that can offer an interpretation of human existence by means of which people can situate themselves in the world and direct their actions to ends that transcend their own immediate situations. He argues that liberalism is an .ideology that cannot function effectively as such

The axis about which the failure of liberalism turns is its assertion of the fact! Value gap.(۲) Liberalism fails as an ideology because it does not permit one to discover one's own identity and appropriate ends by gaining knowledge of nature and society, or by understanding human existence in relation to allaqq, the Exalted. In liberalism, all values are personal except the value of respecting personal values, and this is simply .not sufficient to orient one's life

Modernism inhibits orientation because from the point of view of modern liberalism, religious traditions seem irrational. The standards of rationality to which the religious traditions of enquiry appeal are so different from those which dominate the natural and social sciences in the West today that traditional and modernist ways of thinking .have become nearly mutually incomprehensible

Nevertheless, a tradition may come to be

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۱ - See Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, Liberals and Communitarians, ۲nd ed., .((Oxford: Blackwell, ۱۹۹۶

۲ - Alasdair MacIntyre, Marxism and Christianity (Notre Dame: University of Notre .Dame Press, ۱۹۸۴), ۱۲۴

rationally accepted by those who live within the horizons of Western liberal culture

once they come to recognize themselves as imprisoned by a set of beliefs which lack justification in precisely the same way and to the same extent as do the positions which they reject but also to understand themselves as hitherto deprived of what tradition affords, as persons in part constituted as what they are up to this point by an absence, by what is from the standpoint of traditions an impoverishment.(۱)

The impoverishment of which MacIntyre speaks here is one which Islam excels at eradicating. What the individual posited by liberal theory lacks is an effective ideology to provide understanding and purpose on the basis of which communities can be established. Modern liberal thinkers imagine themselves to be independent, far beyond the constraints of any ideology, but MacIntyre charges that from an Aristotelian point of view they have refused to learn or have been unable to learn that "one cannot think for oneself if one thinks entirely by oneself," and that it is only by participation in rational practice-based community that one becomes truly rational.

MacIntyre admits that this kind of recognition amounts to a sort of conversion. Individuals at the point of conversion will invite a tradition of enquiry to furnish them with a kind of self-knowledge which they have not as yet possessed by first providing them with an awareness of the specific character of their own incoherence and then accounting for the particular character of

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۱- MacIntyre (۱۹۸۸), ۳۹۶.

this incoherence by its metaphysical, moral, and political scheme of classification and explanation.

The catalogs of virtues and vices, the norms of conformity and deviance, the accounts of educational success and failure, the narratives of possible types of human life which each tradition has elaborated in its own terms, all these invite the individual educated into self-knowledge of his or her own incoherence to acknowledge in which of these rival modes of moral understanding he or she finds him or herself most adequately explained and accounted for.(۱)

Not only does MacIntyre explain how someone in a liberal society may evolve to the point of being able to convert to a religious tradition, his astute observations regarding the logic of liberal thought also helps to illuminate the West's failure to .understand and hostility toward the current Islamic movement

The liberal's moral analysis is one that begins by abstracting the claims to be debated from their contexts in tradition, and then proceeds with an evaluation of rational justifiability that is supposed to convince any rational person. The liberal fantasy of universal progress implies that the most rational standards are those that dominate .the most recent trends of its own thought

To the extent that Muslims are unwilling to adopt the standards of modernism, they are thought to be irrational. Islamic intellectual traditions are taken to be more or less the same as what the West progressed beyond when it abandoned medieval .scholasticism

The caricature of Islam drawn by the liberal West requires neglect of

p: ۲۵۶

.MacIntyre (۱۹۸۸), ۳۹۸ -۱

the particularities of character, history, and circumstance. This makes it impossible to engage in the kind of rational dialogue that could move through argumentative .evaluation to the rational acceptance or rejection of a tradition

Thus, the kind of debate which is enforced in the public forums of enquiry in modern liberal culture for the most part effectively preclude the voices of tradition outside .liberalism from being heard

Materialistic consumerism is a direct result of the liberal's pretense of neutrality. Since all the citizens of the liberal state are supposed to be free to pursue their own happiness, and since despite their differences about what ultimate happiness is, the vast majority seem to be in agreement on the idea that its pursuit is aided by ever

increasing acquisition and consumption, which goes by the euphemism of economic development, it becomes nearly self-evident that it is in the national interests of the liberal state to pursue economic development.(۱)

MacIntyre explains that those who adhere to the standpoint dominant in peculiarly modern societies recognize that acquisitiveness is a character trait indispensable to continuous and limitless economic growth, and one of their central beliefs is that continuous and limitless economic growth is a fundamental good. That a systematically lower standard of living ought to be preferred to a systematically higher standard of living is a thought incompatible with either the economics or the politics of peculiarly modern societies..

But a community which was guided by Aristotelian norms would not only have to view acquisitiveness as

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۱ - For a critique of unrestrained development by the Muslim American scholar of tasawwuf, William Chittick, see his "Toward a Theology of Development", Echo of Islam, October ۱۹۹۴, the Farsi translation of which, by Narjess Javandel, appeared in Ma'rifat, No. ۱۴, ۴۰-۴۹.

a vice but would have to set strict limits to growth insofar as that is necessary to preserve or enhance adistribution of goods according to desert.(۱)

From the Aristotelian point of view advocated by MacIntyre, the problem with the modern liberal state goes way beyond its worldliness. There is no way, MacIntyre insists, for those who rule in a modern state to avoid doing injustice.

Modern nation-states which masquerade as embodiments of community are always to be resisted. The modern nation-state, in whatever guise, is a dangerous and unmanageable institution, presenting itself on the one hand as a bureaucratic supplier of goods and services, which is always about to, but never actually does, give its clients value for money, and on the other as a repository of sacred values, which from

time to time invites one to lay down one's life on its behalf; .it is like being asked to die for the telephone company. . To empower even the liberal state as a bearer of values (always imperils those values..(۲

His criticism of the liberal state is so harsh that it could be mistaken for a form of anarchism was it not for the fact that he explicitly advises his readers to cooperate ?with the state by paying their taxes. What sort of politics does MacIntyre advocate

MacIntyre suggests that the focus of the political life of an Aristotelian of the sort he lauds should be "the family, the neighborhood, the workplace, the parish, and the school, or clinic, communities within

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.MacIntyre (۱۹۸۸), ۱۱۲. See Beiner (۱۹۹۲), ۱۶۴ -۱
After MacIntyre, ۳۰۳ -۲

which the needs of the hungry and the homeless can be met."(۱) Are we then to leave (the state to "the barbarians" mentioned at the close of After virtue?(۲

And what are we to do about the hungry and homeless who live outside our parish? Is it not incumbent upon a religious society to take the reins of state power out of the hands of those who are driving it to ruin, even if the nation-state of its own momentum will not readily change course? A more realistic political Aristotelianism than the one advocated by MacIntyre would not shun the need to shoulder the burden of the modern state in full recognition of its deficiencies and in the hope that it .could be transformed into something better

MacIntyre does not see this as a live option because he seems to be thinking of Europe and the U.S., where the prospects for anything better than liberal government are unpromising, because the major alternative there to liberalism is nationalism, and nationalism easily degrades into the fascist rage we have witnessed in the attempt to .exterminate the Muslims of Bosnia

Within Muslim societies, however, there is an alternative to both nationalism and liberalism that is not taken seriously by Western theorists.(۳)

MacIntyre's retreat to the local takes the punch out of his critique of liberalism. Liberals do not oppose local associations with substantive ideologies, values and purposes. Liberal political theory is a theory of government, not of local voluntary associations. If MacIntyre had announced at

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۱- Interview with Alasdair MacIntyre in The American Philosopher, Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, ۱۹۹۴), p. ۱۵۱.

۲- There he writes: "What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us. And if the tradition of the virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages, we are not entirely without grounds for hope. This time however the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time." After virtue, ۲۶۳.

۳- See Beiner (۱۹۹۲), ۳۰-۳۱.

the start of his book that his quarrel with liberalism was over how local associations are to be organized, and not about government, it would not have attracted the attention it has.

Indeed, if one were to read Whose Justice? Which Rationality? from the start with the assumption that the critique of liberalism was not to extend to liberal theories of government, much of what MacIntyre says would not make any sense.

Consider the passage quoted above in which limits to economic growth are advocated. What is at issue here is how whole societies conduct their economic affairs, and no matter how large and thriving the private sector of any society is, the role of governments in directing the economic affairs of the societies they rule is undeniable.

So, what MacIntyre is objecting to is the flaws of liberal governments and of liberal theories of how governments should conduct their affairs.

Here again, MacIntyre's work should be helpful for those engaged in the development of Islamic political theory. If we accept MacIntyre's critique of the modern form of nation state, the creation of Islamic republic's cannot be the ultimate goal of Islamic political activity, but only an intermediary stage in a development leading to more perfectly Islamic forms of governance, culminating in the governance of the Vali al'Asr (as), may his emergence be hastened.

Religion

Muslims share a common cause with Western critics of liberalism, such as MacIntyre and others who have launched their criticisms from a religious standpoint. By

examining this work it may even be discovered that this sort of criticism is more appropriate from an Islamic standpoint than from a Neo-Thomist one.

The alienation expressed by MacIntyre is a social one, but there are deeper forms of alienation, which from the religious point of view have their source in distance from God. The sort of community MacIntyre seeks is one whose rival paradigms are those of the Christian Church and the Muslim ummah.

But the source of the cohesion of these communities is their harmony with the divine order. If the methods of evaluation of rival traditions as outlined by MacIntyre are to be employed to compare Christendom and the ummah, it will be necessary to examine the ways in which the intellectual traditions within the two communities have responded and continue to formulate responses to the challenge of liberal modernism.

For his own part, MacIntyre concludes that the Thomistic synthesis of Augustinian and Aristotelian thought has been confirmed in its encounters with other traditions. But the analysis he offers is not specific to the defense of Catholicism, but rather may

be used to support various forms of traditional thought against the secular liberal .scientism that prevails in the West

Indeed, a major flaw in all of MacIntyre's writings is that it fails to pay any attention to Islam at all. When MacIntyre compares competing traditions of liberal, Marxist and religious thought, the term religious can always be replaced by Christian without (altering the intended meaning.(١

Prior to his

p: ٢۶١

١- MacIntyre admits his neglect of Islam, despite its importance, "not only for its own sake but also because of its large contribution to the Aristotelian tradition," in the first .chapter of Whose Justice? Which Rationality? ١١

conversion to Neo-Thomism, which occurred sometime between the writing of After virtue and Whose Justice? Which Rationality?, MacIntyre could be scathingly critical of (Christianity, even if, at the very same time, appreciative of its strengths.(١

The weaknesses of Christianity to which he drew attention in his first book were its dogmatism and otherworldliness-its inherent tendency to disown its own revolutionary vision, to circumscribe itself within the spiritual and to accommodate .itself to the status quo, even if this meant tyranny

Nothing in Whose Justice? Which Rationality?explains how these criticisms are to be answered. Islam, on the other hand, has not disowned its revolutionary vision, nor has .it had an episode comparable to Galileo's encounter with the Inquisition

This is not to deny that terrible injustices have been and continue to be perpetrated in the name of Islam, nor that fanatical intolerance has not marred doctrinal disputes among Muslims. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the dogmas accepted by Muslims have not prevented them from accepting the natural sciences or technology, nor from the adoption of Western social institutions when it has appeared (rightly or

.wrongly) rational to do so

It must also be admitted that the call for justice issued by Islam, particularly in its Shi'i version, retains its ability to inspire revolutionary fervor. Muslims have not abandoned the hope for a just society in this world.

Because it began as a political no less than spiritual movement, Muslims cannot deny that Islam demands them to seek justice in the here

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۱- See Alasdair MacIntyre, Marxism and Christianity (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, ۱۹۸۴).

and now. Because of the priority of the spiritual, however, Islam is able to provide the moral basis and orientation lacking in secular ideologies.

MacIntyre's failure to answer his own criticisms of Christianity have left at least one Muslim reader with the impression that his work provides a better defense of Islam than it does for the Christianity he himself professes.

History

The review I have presented thus far of Whose Justice? Which Rationality? May give the false impression that the book consists of highly abstract discussions of such issues as relativism, liberalism, rationality and religious traditions.

Such discussions are indeed to be found between the covers of this volume, but the bulk of the work is history. The concepts of justice and practical rationality are examined through their historical developments in four traditions: Aristotelian, Augustinian, Humean and modern liberal.

The book is divided into twenty chapters, the first of which is an introduction. There follow seven chapters on the evolution of the concepts of justice and practical rationality from the Homeric period, through Plato and culminating in one chapter

.each on Aristotle's conceptions of justice and practical rationality

Next come three chapters on Augustine and the synthesis between Aristotelian and Augustinian thought formulated by Aquinas. Five chapters follow this on the Scottish Enlightenment, ending with a critique of Hume. There is only one chapter specifically .devoted to modern liberalism, and then three more to draw conclusions

MacIntyre contends that the concepts of justice and practical rationality must be studied through the

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examination of the traditions in which these concepts have emerged. But the history MacIntyre tells is not a mere recounting of what was said or written in the past; rather, it is a critical history in which triumphs and defeats are evaluated, and lessons .drawn for contemporary thinking on the relevant issues

The critique of liberalism, for example, is not confined to the chapter devoted specifically to this topic, but is a theme that recurs amidst historical discussions of earlier traditions of enquiry. As a result, the history of ideas recounted by MacIntyre is not a mere succession of doctrines espoused and then forgotten, but it is a history of how ideas become influential, are misunderstood and are reformed and synthesized with others through an ongoing process of rational evaluation in which the very .standards of rational evaluation themselves take part in the process

It is here that MacIntyre may be misunderstood as advocating historicism, the view that reality is beyond the reach of the human intellect because the intellect is forever .held captive to the prejudices and other shortcomings of its historical situation

This sort of historicism is said to result from subtracting the notion of Absolute Mind from Hegel's philosophy,(۱) and it is not uncommon among twentieth century philosophers. Versions of it have been propounded by Dewey, Rorty, Gadamer and Foucault. But MacIntyre explicitly rejects historicism in both its Hegelian and its more .recent formulations

And here our discussion of the role of history in MacIntyre's work returns us

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See Hilary Putnam, "Beyond Historicism" in Realism and Reason: Philosophical - ۱ .Papers volume ۳ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ۱۹۸۳), ۲۸۷-۲۸۸

to the rejection of relativism. Contrary to the relativist historicists, he holds that it is precisely through the study of the history of rational debate that the timeless truth reveals itself, and furthermore, he claims that this approach to reality is advocated by .Aquinas

MacIntyre is aware that it will be objected that rational justification, according to both Aristotle and Aquinas, is a matter of deducibility from first principles, in the case of derived propositions, and of the self-evidence of these first principles as necessary .truths

MacIntyre responds that this objection fails to recognize the difference between rational justification within a science and the rational justification of the sciences. It is only the former sort of justification that proceeds by way of deduction and self-.evidence

Rational justification within a perfected science is indeed a matter of demonstrating how derivative truths follow from the first truths of that particular science, in some types of case supplemented by additional premises; and the justification of the principles of a subordinate science by some higher-order enquiry will be similarly (demonstrative.(۱

As for the rational justification of the sciences, however, this method is inadequate, for here we face disagreement about what is self-evident. But in the face of this disagreement we are not to despair, for the intellect has the capacity for dialectical as :well as deductive reasoning. The passage quoted above continues

First principles themselves will be dialectically justifiable; their evidentness consists in

their recognizability, in the light of such dialectic, as concerning what is

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.MacIntyre (۱۹۸۸), ۱۷۳ -۱

the case per se, what attributes, for example, belong to the essential nature of what constitutes the fundamental subject matter of the science in question.

MacIntyre continues with the admission that there are some first-principles, such as the logical relations between wholes and parts, that any rational being must find undeniable. But these alone will not be sufficient to provide the necessary basis for the deductive justification of the sciences.

The self-evident principles admitted by rival traditions of enquiry will not be sufficient to settle the disputes between them. For disputes at such a fundamental level there is no alternative but examination of the history of thought on the disputed subject, an appreciation of the insights to be gained from each of the rival modes of enquiry, and an attempt to find a place in one's own tradition for the truths formulated in the rival tradition.

In this way, we find suggestions in Whose Justice? Which Rationality? for a program which would lead to the development of Islamic thought, and whose successful completion would result in the revival and vindication of its traditions of enquiry in the international market place of ideas as well as Islamic centers of learning, God willing!

Needless to say, the task at hand is a great one that we should not expect to be completed in one or two generations. However, there is reason to be cautiously optimistic. The first steps along this path in twentieth century thought have already been taken by such scholars as Shahid

Mutahhari and Shahid Sadr who have shown that Islamic thought is sufficiently rich and flexible to demonstrate its superiority over Marxism.

Despite this success, work remains to be done even with regard to Marxism in order deepen the critique and thereby to secure the territory gained. There is also a daunting amount of historical research that needs to be done on the developments which have taken place within the Islamic sciences, and not merely philosophy, but .the entire spectrum of Islamic thought, from fiqh to mathematics

We need to understand, for example, how Aristotle's understanding of practical rationality and justice were transformed in the hands of Ibn Sina, not merely insofar as Neoplatonic elements were incorporated, but how the doctrines of Aristotle were reformulated in Farabi's thought and then adopted by Ibn Sina, and exactly how much was changed of this and why by the Safavid period philosophers such as Sadr al-.Muta'alihin

This kind of work requires close textual analysis, and an excellent place to begin is with the themes of Whose Justice? Which Rationality? The concepts of justice and practical rationality. MacIntyre did not review Islamic thought on these issues, but then this is not really his area. Without a familiarity with the relevant Arabic texts, the task cannot be done. This is a task to be taken up by Muslim scholars, and God willing, .it will be

What the study of MacIntyre's work promises for Muslims is an example of how the history of ideas can increase one's understanding

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of philosophical differences, and how that understanding can be used to mount a criticism of elements of Western culture Muslims have also found objectionable. At .every turn, further research by Muslim scholars suggests itself

For example, what are the similarities and differences between the criticism of modernism offered by MacIntyre and that offered by Muslim thinkers? How do the concepts of justice employed by Muslim scholars compare to those exhibited in the ??four traditions MacIntyre discusses in Whose Justice? Which Rationality

What are the similarities and differences between the account of dialectic found in Aquinas and that of the Kitab al-Jadal that scholars say is mistakenly attributed to Farabi? What are the differences between the concept of the nation-state as understood in Western political philosophy and the political entities discussed by .Muslim political thinkers? This list could easily be extended for pages

Muslim thinkers have often neglected the history of ideas in favor of a more direct approach to the ideas themselves. While it may be a useful exercise to consider the positions of ancient and medieval authors without regard to the historical contexts in .which these positions were formulated, history brings depth to understanding

When we come to appreciate how ideas have been forged under the cultural pressures of their times, we gain the ability to look more critically at our own ideas, suspecting that they, too, may have evolved through a process of selection to which .we may not give our approval

This critical attitude may aid us in our

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attempts to uncover hidden assumptions in our own thinking and in the thinking of those whom we would criticize. Once these assumptions are made explicit, we can .examine the arguments and intuitions relevant to them

It seems somewhat ironic that while many have claimed that an historical consciousness is one of the chief distinctions of the Semitic religions, in contrast to Neo-Platonism, for example, and while we find a very subtle historical consciousness advocated in the Qur'an, much of the thought produced by Muslim scholars, even .traditional Islamic thought, seems oblivious to the currents of history

Perhaps it is even more ironic to find that it is precisely this neglect of historical forces that allows modernist ideas to slip through the defenses of Muslim scholars and .intellectuals

We often find commentators who claim that some historical period in the

development of Europe, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, has not yet occurred in the world of Islam, as if it were destined by historical necessity that the rest of the world must repeat the phases of European cultural .transformation

An appreciation of the historical narrative of Islamic thought should help to make it .clear why this will not occur, and perhaps even why it is not desirable

The study of MacIntyre is useful because it provides the deepest criticism from within the West of the cultural developments lumped together under the heading of modernism. MacIntyre's dissatisfactions with modern currents will resonate with Muslims who have not already unconsciously lost touch with their

own traditions in their efforts to 'catch up' with Western technology, Western .management, and Western intellectual fashion

I pray that the translators of MacIntyre's work will be successful, that Muslims will struggle through the issues raised by MacIntyre, and that they will not merely read his !work, but will be inspired by it to advance Islamic scholarship, God willing

Islam Vs Feminism

Introduction

Feminism has radically altered Western culture in the latter half of the twentieth century. Perhaps no other social movement has wrought such profound changes in social mores and attitudes. Sexual revolution and liberation meant that sexual relations should be freed of the constraints associated with traditional Christian .virtue

The gay rights movement extended the demand for freedom regarding sexual relations to homosexuality. Moral censorship was relaxed in print media, cinema and television, and pornography burgeoned. General standards of taste in speech and behavior devolved in response to the dictates of prints, films and broadcasts. Family

ties were weakened and the divorce rate soared. In Scandinavia it is estimated that .roughly half of all infants are born to unwed mothers

It was a bewilderingly abrupt relaxation of the restraints of centuries... The sudden sexual revolution was not just the lifting of censorship. Landlords and hostelers, long forbidden by law to accommodate unwed couples, could now be told not to ask personal questions....The courts were left facing stubborn new problems regarding marital or quasi-marital responsibilities and titles to property. Deeper dislocations of a social kind are being wrought by the weakening

(of the family.(۱

At the same time, women became an increasingly visible force in the workplace, the academy and the political arena, the most outspoken among who have been .feminists

The changes mentioned are not solely the work of feminists. The anti-establishment attitudes among the youth of the ۱۹۶۰'s and the popularity enjoyed by the left .contributed to these changes and also to support for feminism itself

Nevertheless, feminist thought has been a major force in the social upheaval in the West since the sixties that continues to exert its influence, and among the explicit goals feminists have advocated have been the abolition of the family and traditional .gender roles, to which ends they have championed homosexuality and promiscuity

Feminists have managed to set standards for the use of 'nonsexist language' in most universities and publishing houses, the most visible result of which has been an .explosion of the population of feminine pronouns

They have also managed to enforce their own preferences in areas as diverse as script writing, advertising and public employment practices. They have introduced a popular jargon in terms of which important social issues are debated, and they have .begun to export their ideology abroad

Feminism began to establish itself in areas outside the West through is use by colonial powers to undermine local culture in the areas under their control, and although it has met with some resistance, particularly among Muslims, there continues to be a great deal of confusion about what feminism is, about its goals, history and

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.W. v. Quine, Quiddities (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, ۱۹۸۷), ۲۰۷-۲۰۸ -۱

.branches

In what follows a brief introduction to feminism and its history is presented, with particular attention to philosophical and theological issues relevant to Islam. There follows a comparison between feminist and Islamic doctrines in which their utter incompatibility is elucidated. Finally, some observations are drawn with regard to the .Islamic women's movement

A Brief History Of Feminism

Feminism Distinguished From Other Women's Movements

Women have been oppressed ever since the invention of human sin, and for nearly as long they have been engaged in the attempt to free themselves from oppression. The attempts made to end the injustices done to women, particularly when these .injustices are institutionalized, may be called women's movements

In this sense, Islam may be considered a women's movement, because it includes a divinely ordained program for the eradication of injustice done to women. Western women, however, usually fail to recognize Islam as a women's movement, and they restrict the term 'women's movement' to the products of Western culture designed to .change the status of women in society

The industrial revolution of the nineteenth century and the gradual process of urbanization brought women together in the labor force outside the framework of the family, whereas in agrarian society, women worked with family members. At the

.same time, women were excluded from politics

The rights of man proclaimed by the French Revolution were limited to males. During the Enlightenment, women began to demand 'emancipation', freedom from dependency on men, educational opportunity and political rights.

Feminists would go on to make more radical claims, including among the most prominent of these: legalized abortion

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on demand, free love or sexual liberation, complete equality with men and the abolition of differentiation of the roles of the sexes. Feminism is often defined as a movement seeking full equality of rights with men, but it is important to emphasize that the equality of rights sought by feminists goes far beyond equality under the law.

Feminism aims at the eradication of any difference in social roles based on gender difference, and this is what distinguishes it from other women's movements.(۱) Nevertheless, the feminist movement includes within its ranks writers and activists who differ on many fundamental issues in philosophy, politics and morals.

What unites them is the social ideal of the elimination of traditional gender roles. Feminism may thus be defined as a branch of the women's movement that aims at the elimination of traditional gender roles. However, confusion exists about the use of the term 'feminism', for there are writers who fail to distinguish feminism from the more general women's movement.

The focus of attention in what follows will be on feminist philosophy (including political philosophy) and feminist theology, however, among the important feminist writings there are also works on psychoanalysis, jurisprudence and literary criticism.

Feminism And Socialism

Perhaps the first use of the term 'feminism' was in the early nineteenth century by the socialist, Charles Fourier (۱۷۷۲-۱۸۳۷). The followers of another early socialist, Henri de

Saint-Simon (۱۷۶۰-۱۸۲۵), introduced the androgyny principle, according to which there was a mixed male and female being at the beginning of history.

Muslims will find)

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۱- The Duden German dictionary defines feminism as a "direction within the women's movement that strives for a new self-understanding by women and the abolition of the traditional separation of roles." Duden ۱, ۲۰th ed. (Mannheim: ۱۹۹۱), p. ۲۶۷.Cited in and corroborated with other references to leading feminists in Germany in Manfred Hauke, God or Goddess? (San Francisco: ۱۹۹۵), p. ۲۰-۲۱. This article is deeply indebted to Hauke's book,and all the references to German feminists as well as much other material is taken from Hauke's citations or summarized from his discussions.

it amusing to learn that Saint-Simon's disciples went to Turkey to seek the female savior after having lost hope of finding a truly free woman in Europe!) Socialist feminists advocated the abolition of any division of labor along sex specific lines, and called for quotas whereby half of all the positions in every field of employment are to be filled by women.

With the domination of Marxism among the various forms of socialism, socialist feminism also came to be dominated by Marxist feminism, first elaborated in ۱۸۴۴ by Engels in Der Ursprung der Familie (The Origen of the Family).

In this work Engles demands the abolition of the family, uniform integration of men and women into the labor force and the communal raising of children in order to achieve equality among all people and an end to the domination of one person over another.

Although socialism has lost popularity in recent years and Marxism, in particular, seems on the verge of extinction, a political left continues to survive, even in America, especially in academia. As the academic left has also welcomed feminism, so too, Marxist ideas continue to find expression in the writings of important feminist leaders.

Perhaps the most notable lesson feminists have learned from Marxists is their polemical style. Articles on feminism, even those printed in such reputable works as the Encyclopedia of Ethics and the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy do not merely describe the work of feminists; they actively advocate the abolition of traditional gender roles for the sake of

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.the liberation of women

Like Marxists, feminists have also adopted an ideologically charged rhetoric with which to declaim their analyses and polemics. Often the language used is directly .inspired by Marxist terminology, even when Marxism is itself explicitly rejected

More orthodox Marxist and socialist feminists argue that the oppression of women has its roots in the class system, and that the system must be overturned in order to liberate women. Feminist critics of Marxist feminism have argued that men exploit the labor of women through housework regardless of the class system, so that the class analysis is insufficient and must be supplemented by an analysis of exploitation based .on gender

Feminist Philosophy

Certainly the most famous of feminist philosophers of the twentieth century was Simone de Beauvoir (۱۹۰۸-۱۹۸۶). In ۱۹۴۹ she published Le Deuxieme Sexe (The Second !Sex) in which she elaborated an existentialist

Marxist analysis of the relations between men and women. As existentialist thought emphasizes the radical freedom of the individual to arbitrarily choose his essence, de Beauvoir makes the dramatic claim that one's gender is also a matter choice. To the .extent that biology would seem to indicate otherwise, she finds biology degrading

Biology gives men a freedom from reproductive processes that women lack, so she sees femininity as an obstacle to being truly human. Later feminists have criticized de Beauvoir for her disparagement of female anatomy and for advocating that women

.take men's roles in society

Nevertheless, it is generally acknowledged that her work set out what would become major themes of later

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feminist writing: the difference between sex and gender (biological and social sexual characteristics), concern with autobiography seen as a political statement, and the .need to draw upon various disciplines in the analysis of gender roles

While de Beauvoir's feminism has much in common with the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, more recent feminists have drawn from the philosophies of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida to apply the methods of genealogical analysis and deconstruction to issues pertaining to gender, including women's roles in society, .women's psychology, and the political oppression of women

Feminists, however, have not merely made use of philosophical trends for their own purposes; they have also elaborated positions in virtually all the major areas of philosophy. Hence, there are feminist readings of the history of philosophy, feminist philosophy of science, feminist epistemology, feminist social and political philosophy, feminist ethics and even feminist ontology. The Society for Women in Philosophy was .founded in ۱۹۷۲ whose journal, Hypatia, publishes articles on feminist philosophy

In the history of philosophy, feminists have concerned themselves with two major projects. First, a number of works have been written that aim to disclose bias against women or gender stereotypes in the writings of Western philosophers from Plato and Aristotle to John Rawls. Descartes has been a particular target of these sorts of (critique.(۱

Second, there has been an attempt to emphasize the importance of women philosophers throughout history. A major accomplishment in this program was the (publication of Mary Ellen Waith's three-volume A History of Women Philosophers.(۲

Feminist philosophy of

.(See A. Nye, Philosophy and Feminism: At the Border (New York:۱۹۹۵ -۱

.(Mary Ellen Waith, A History of Women Philosophers ۳ vols.(Dordrecht: ۱۹۸۷-۱۹۹۱ -۲

science and epistemology has for the most part sought to refute claims to the objectivity of science and knowledge, and to identify gender bias in the works of .scientists and philosophers

Modeled on the Marxist idea that culture is a superstructure that reflects class interests, feminist 'standpoint theories' advocates the idea that a specifically feminine (view of the world is possible when science is practiced from a woman's perspective.(۱

A current topic of debate in feminist philosophy of science and epistemology is whether emphasis on the uniqueness of the female perspective implies relativism or a .denial of objective truth

Feminist approaches to ethics place a strong emphasis on politics. They are more concerned with power than goodness, and often provide criticism of the ways in .which traditional ethics contributes to the subordination and oppression of women

Allison Jagger, for example, suggests that feminist ethics should provide guides to (action that will subvert the subordination of women.(۲

Lesbian feminists have proposed a feminist ethics based onthe proposition that women cannot enter a relationship with men without becoming victims of subjugation, and that lesbian communities should construct their own ethics on the basis of a quest for freedom and self-identity rather than the good, and choice rather (than duty.(۳

Lesbians have played an important role in the feminist movement, and although not all feminists are advocates of lesbianism, feminists generally condone lesbianism as (an implication of the attack on traditional gender roles.(۴

Feminists have also been critical of those who have proposed a particularly feminine

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See Sandra Harding, Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thingking from Women's -١ .(Lives (Ithaca: ١٩٩١

Allison Jagger, "Feminist Ethics", in L. Becker and C. Becker, eds., The Encyclopedia -٢ (of Ethics(New York: Garland, ١٩٩٢

.(Sarah Lucia Hoagland, Lesbian Ethics (Palo Alto: Institute of Lesbian Studies, ١٩٨٨ -٣

.(See Christa Mulack, Natirlich Weiblich (Stuttgart: ١٩٩٠ -۴

ethics. For example, the renowned moral psychologist, Carol Gilligan, has proposed that an ethics of care is more suitable to explain the moral development of girls than the ethics of justice used by her mentor, Lawrence Kohlberg, to explain the moral (development of boys.(١

Feminists respond that Gilligan places too much emphasis on the virtue of caring for women because this may serve to support rather than undermine established gender differentiation.(٢) Likewise, feminists reject the feminine ethics proposed by ethicists who focus on the moral insights to be gained through an examination of maternal .relationships

Feminists argue that by giving primacy to women's roles as mothers, feminine ethics fails to encourage women to gain the traits necessary to overturn patriarchy and .gender bias

An important part of the feminist polemic is the insistence that traditional gender roles based on sexual differences is wrong, that patriarchy is a form of oppression and subjugation of women, that women have been unjustly marginalized and ignored, .that women's rights have been violated

So, there is a moral demand in feminism for the subversion of patriarchal social arrangements, for the rewriting of history, for the critique of every element of culture dominated by a male perspective, including (to mention but a few) art, psychology, .theology and ethics itself

Feminist political thought begins with Marxism. According to Marx and Engles, it is the class system that lies at the source of all oppression, and the family is a social institution reflective of that oppressive system. The call for

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Carol Gilligan, In a Different voice: Psycological Theory and Women's Development -۱ .((Cambridge: Harvard University Press, ۱۹۸۲

Shiela Mullett, "Shifting Perspectives: A New Approach to Ethics", in L. Code, S. -۲ Mullett, C. Overall, eds., Feminist Perspectives: Philosophical Essays on Method and .(Morals (Toronto: University of Toronto, ۱۹۸۸

the abolition of the family is inseparable from the call for the abolition of the capitalist .system and its replacement by communism

While some feminists have endorsed a more or less orthodox Marxist view of the family, others have sought to place gender roles at the foundation of their political thought. Instead of seeing the family as a reflection of the underlying capitalist system of production, they view capitalism as a result of the oppressive nature of .patriarchy

Kate Millet, an activist in the 'Women's Liberation Movement' of the late ۱۹۶۰'s, accordingly claimed that the most entrenched oppressive structure in human society .is not capitalism, but male dominance

The development of feminism is often divided into three waves, each of which is associated with a characteristic type of political demand. The first wave is said to include the emancipation and socialist movements of the nineteenth and early .twentieth centuries

In addition to Engles' The Origin of the Family (۱۸۸۴) and Mill's The Subjection of Women (۱۸۶۹), the writings and speeches of the Russian born American anarchist, Emma Goldman (۱۸۶۹-۱۹۴۰), are included among the major philosophical statements of

feminist thought in this period, which is sometimes extended to include de Beauvoir's .work, as well

Feminism is thus foremost a social and political movement, and it is not surprising to .find that its core philosophical expressions take the form of social-political philosophy

The feminism of the ۱۹۶۰'s and ۷۰'s is called 'second wave'. It is characterized by the radicalization of the movement. While first-wave

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feminists called for an end to legal discriminations against women so that there would be no legal difference between the status of men and women, second-wave feminists came to view the concepts of male and female social roles to be bound up with .patriarchy and called for the elimination of both

The third-wave feminism of the ۱۹۸۰'s and ۹۰'s is marked by a rejection of any sort of essentialism. Earlier feminists had made general pronouncements about women, their exploitation and how they should go about liberation. Third-wave feminists argued that a natural implication of the rejection of traditional ideas about gender is the realization of the diversity of feminine types among women of different races, .classes, nationalities and sexual orientations

Third-wave feminists promote a vision of liberation in which there is a wide ranging plurality rather than any single ideal of the liberated woman. Liberation is seen as .diversity in the options available for sexual relations and gender roles

Another division of types of feminism is fourfold: liberal, radical, socialist and postmodernist. Liberal feminism has its roots in the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft (۱۷۵۷-۱۷۹۷) and John Stuart Mill (۱۸۰۶-۱۸۷۳) who demanded equal rights for women.

In the ۱۹۶۰'s liberal feminists in the United States fought for women's rights to abortion on demand, support for working mothers, the universal availability of childcare centers, and greater representation in government, business and the .academy

This led to calls for 'affirmative action', legal measures to promote the hiring of women and minorities in order

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to redress past injustices done to them. While liberal feminists emphasize the common humanity of men and women as a basis for equality of rights, radical feminists celebrate the differences between the experiences of men and women.

They argue that women's experiences have been suppressed and that as a result all aspects of culture, from literature and science to politics and law, betray the biases of and in favor of male sensibilities. Socialist feminism has been discussed already, and post-modernist feminism seems to be another term for third wave feminism.

Feminist Theology

Feminist theology began to establish itself in the ۱۹۷۰'s.During that decade the journal Concilium was launched to promote feminist theology, the first conferences were held to discuss feminist theology in the U.S., the World Council of Churches held a conference in Berlin on sexism, and Mary Daly published Beyond God the Father.(۱)

Like liberation theology, to which it is closely linked both historically and theoretically, feminist theology draws upon and criticizes Marxist thought. Religion is interpreted in such a way that its primary function is seen as liberation, liberation of the poor in liberation theology and of women in feminist theology. Feminist theology may be divided into moderate and radical tendencies.

The moderate tendencies advocate reinterpretations of the established religions to purge them of what are considered sexist or androcentric elements. The radical tendencies advocate a rejection of patriarchal religious thought in favor of the worship of one or more goddesses or even witchcraft.

One of the areas of scholarship

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Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation – ۱ .((Boston: ۱۹۷۳

to which moderate feminists have devoted their attention is the history of the church. Feminists such as Elisabeth Schlssler Fiorenza argue that the early Christians were egalitarians, but that as the Church hierarchy developed, bias against women became institutionalized, and infected many subsequent theological discussions.(۱)

The method employed by Schlssler Fiorenza is broadly sociological, and draws upon liberation theology. The conclusions reached are relatively moderate: the feminist critique is to lead to Church reform.(۲)

Feminists who focus on psychoanalytic methods draw more radical conclusions. Following C. G. Jung, feminists such as Christa Mulack hold that the unconscious, which is associated with the feminine, is primary, and that male dominated religion has suppressed the feminine in favor of the male. On this view, the Hebrew prophets are seen as rebels against "the Great Goddess."

Feminist theologians who concentrate on psychology tend to reject equality feminism in favor of a feminism in which the feminine is paramount, or gynocentric feminism. They also tend to reject Christianity rather than call for its reform. While the majority of feminist theologians appear to be comparatively moderate, the radicals constitute a very influential minority.

The most famous feminist theologian, a radical advocate of gynocentric feminism sometimes referred to as the 'foster mother of feminist theology', is the former Catholic nun, Mary Daly. She was the first American woman to earn a doctorate in Catholic theology at the University of Fribourg (in ۱۹۶۳).

Her first major work, The Church and the Second Sex,(۳) echoes many of the ideas of

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See Elisabeth Schlssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological – ۱

.(Reconstruction of Christian Origins (New York: ۱۹۸۳

۲ - Other moderate Christian feminists are Elisabeth Grossman, Rosemary Reuther, Catharina Halkes and Elisabeth Moltman-Wendel.

۳- (New York: ۱۹۶۸).

Simone de Beauvoir, but applies them to Church history and theology. She calls for Church reform and a reinterpretation of Christianity along the lines of equality (feminism. Her most famous work, however, is Beyond God the Father.(۱)

In this work Daly argues that the Christian concept of God is irredeemably androcentric, and she coins the often-quoted slogan of feminist theology, "If God is male, then the male is God."(۲) The male dominance in Christian thought is further demanded by Trinitarian doctrine, according to which the male Christ is 'God the Son', the second person of the Trinity, and the first person of the Trinity is 'God the Father'.

Instead, Daly proposes that God be considered in a non-personal manner as the ground of all being, as taught by Paul Tillich. Daly's next major work, Gyn/Ecology,(۳) makes a complete break from Christianity with the rejection of God in favor of the Goddess and the glorification of witchcraft as the esoteric knowledge of an earlier matriarchal culture. She also reasserts her advocacy of lesbianism and rejection of the complementarity of the masculine and the feminine. This was followed by the publication of an even more radical work, Pure Lust,(۴) in which lust is turned into a virtue through which 'complete empowerment' is to be achieved.

Perhaps the most famous French feminist who has written on theology is Luce Irigaray. She writes from a postmodernist perspective critical of equality feminism. Her ideal is not a society in which gender differences are eliminated, but one in

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۱- Mary Daly (۱۹۷۳).

۲- Daly (۱۹۷۳), ۱۹.

۳- Mary Daly, GynIEcology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: ۱۹۷۸).

۴- Mary Daly, Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy (Boston: ۱۹۸۴).

which a new femininity emerges from the experiences of women freed from male .domination

Liberation has theological implications. Like Mary Daly, she opposes Christianity for its masculine conception of God, particularly as expressed in the concept of the Trinity. Although she argues that women need religion and divinity, the idea of God presented .in the revealed religions is rejected

Respect for God is possible as long as no one realizes that he is a mask concealing the fact that men have taken sole possession of the divine, of identity, and of kinship. Once we give this whole issue the attention and serious consideration it deserves, however, it becomes obvious that God is being used by men to oppress women and that; therefore, God must be questioned and not simply neutered in the current (pseudo liberal way.(۱

She claims that only a "God in the feminine gender" can maintain women's freedom (and fulfillment "as individuals and as members of a community."(۲

While most feminist theologians do not advocate the goddess theologies suggested by Daly and Irigaray, they are moderate only in comparison to extreme views such as these.So-called moderate feminist theologians accept much of the general orientation of feminism: the rejection of gender complementarity, the acceptance of 'non-traditional families' consisting of homosexual partners with or without children and unwed mothers with children, and a hermeneutic based on the attempt to .uncover gender bias

They advocate the rewriting of religious texts in such a way that all masculine references to God are replaced by

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۱ - Luce Irigaray, Sexes and Genealogies, tr. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia .University Press, ۱۹۹۳), v

۲- Irigaray (۱۹۹۳), ۷۲.

neuter or masculine and feminine references, so that where the Bible refers to God as ."'our Father", the feminists replace this by "our Mother and Father

While this may seem superficial, moderate feminist theologians tend to interpret the basic message of Christianity as a call to struggle for liberation, particularly, the liberation of women from male domination, which entails the dismantling of the .traditional family

The Islamic Opposition To Feminism

Although Islam and feminism are not completely without common ground, the values and principles of Islam and feminism are generally contrary. Both condemn the oppression of women. Both insist that women may own their own property and .dispose of it as they wish. In theology, both reject the symbol of 'Father' for God

However, the feminist view that patriarchy is equivalent to the oppression of women is not compatible with Islam. The feminist idea that traditional gender roles are to be eliminated is opposed by the Islamic idea that the primary role of woman (after that .of servant of God) is that of wife and mother

Theologically, while feminists view the divine as 'Mother and Father' or as goddess, Islam considers the parent metaphor inappropriate for divinity and categorically .denies the existence of gods and goddesses

The Conflicting Ideals Of Islam And Feminism

While feminism rejects any sort of complementarity of the sexes, Islam emphasizes it through the accentuation of different social roles for men and women. Feminism is critical of the institution of marriage because it leads to the subordination of women, ,while Islam strongly recommends marriage for both men and women

and the marriage institution in Islam is one in which husbands and wives have clearly distinct responsibilities and duties. The leadership role for men is taken for granted in

.Islam, while feminists consider it oppression

Traditional Islamic thought has celebrated the hierarchical structure of the universe as a pointer toward the divine, and has seen echoes of this in the relationship of mind and body, spirit and psyche, king and subject, master and slave, and man and woman. This does not mean that Islam condones all such relationships as found in traditional societies, but it does mean that relationships of subordination and hierarchy are not .for that very reason to be considered evil, as feminists hold they are

According to Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, the "crux of patriarchal theology" is "the dominance implied in the relationship between mind and body: will over the unconscious, history over nature, man over woman."(۱)

Rosemary Reuther displays the same attitude: "Sexual symbolism is foundational to the perception of order and relationship that has been built up in cultures. The psychic organization of consciousness, the dualistic view of the self and the world, the hierarchical concept of society, the relation of humanity and nature, and of God and creation-all these relationships have been modeled on sexual dualism."(۲)

As Hauke points out, "The implicit supposition here is that subordination and inferiority are identical and that they signify 'division' and 'rape'."(۳)

Islam is the obedient subordination of man to God. In his submission to God, however, man is not oppressed by God, but

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۱ - Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, "Werkstatt Ohne Angst" Forum Religion ۳!۱۹۸۷, ۳۴. Cited in Hauke (۱۹۹۵), ۹۵.

۲ - Rosemary Reuther, New Woman-New Earth (New York: ۱۹۷۵), ۳. Cited in Hauke (۱۹۹۵), ۹۶.

۳- Hauke (۱۹۹۵), ۹۶.

perfected. While feminists consider the condition of women to be better when they

have more choices, because they hold that the good is the free expression and satisfaction of free ranging desire, the good in Islam is viewed as the annihilation of .the self with its desires in divinity

This divine encounter is approached through the attainment of virtue and the .conquest of the illicit desires of the self

Complementarity, the Family and Sexuality

Europeans have condemned Islam for its acceptance of human sexuality and sensuality and for its repression of the same. When Victorian morals dominated Europe, Islam was seen as a naughty religion offering its believers promises of .sensual delight in the afterlife

When European morals changed and Freudian ideas had been popularized, Islam was condemned for the limitations it places on sexual relations. In feminist writing, both attitudes are expressed. To a certain extent, this may be due to different ideas about .sexuality current among feminists

Some feminists, for example, consider prostitution a legitimate form of labor, and prefer the term 'sexual worker', while other feminists consider prostitution and the 'sex industry' as manifestations of the degradation of women at the hands of the .patriarchic system

Some feminists call for changes in Islamic societies so that women may be given .more sexual license, while others call for greater restrictions to be placed upon men

Islam clearly recognizes and accepts human sexuality. Sexual pleasure in itself is not considered evil, as it is in some Christian texts. Nevertheless, Islam

p: ۲۸۷

places strict constraints on sexual behavior. These constraints differ for men and women. Men are permitted to have more than one wife simultaneously, while women .are not permitted to have more than one husband at any one time

It must be admitted that Muslim men sometimes abuse this and other permissions granted them by Islamic law to do injustice to women. Feminists conclude from this that Islamic law is oppressive to women. However, in the context of the laws governing sexual relations in other societies, whether liberal, communist or Christian, some men also take advantage of the opportunities they find there to oppress .women

Should we then conclude that all laws governing sexual relations are oppressive to women? Even if a society were constructed in which there were absolutely no laws governing sexual relations, some men would still oppress women, probably even more than they do in Muslim societies. The problem would seem to reside not in the .law, but in the morals of those who would abuse it for selfish purposes

With all the freedoms and rights granted to women in the US, the claim that women are better off than they were earlier is dubious. Statistics show that more women live in poverty than before. Divorce has been made easy, and custody of children is normally awarded to mothers, while the support that could be provided by other .family members has been undermined with the erosion of the family

Islamic law functions to preserve the family structure through patriarchal hierarchy

p: ۲۸۸

in which a base line of duties toward women is clearly drawn. Furthermore, there is considerable room for women to maneuver within the framework of Islamic family .law to prevent their husbands from arbitrarily divorcing them or remarrying

This seems far better for women than the Western customs in which the average duration of marriage is five years and in which it is common for men to keep .mistresses

The Role Of Women In Islam

The most important and most emphasized role for women mentioned in Islamic sources is that of wife and mother, but the role of woman in Islam is by no means

limited to this. Women may be entrepreneurs, as was Khadijah, the first wife of .Muhammad (s) and the first convert to Islam

They may also take a strong political stand even leading to martyrdom, as did Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad (s), wife of Imam 'Ali and mother of Imams .Hasan and Husayn, peace be with all of them

Some positions, however, such as leading prayers for men, are considered .inappropriate for women

Westerners often assume that because social relations between men and women are restricted in Islamic societies in ways that seem strange to them, that Muslim women are not socially and politically active. The following anecdote reported by W. Morgan Shuster regarding events in Tehran in ۱۹۱۱provides some indication of how mistaken .this assumption is

With the dark days when doubts came to be whispered as to whether the Medjlis would stand firm [against Russian threats], the Persian women, in their

p: ۲۸۹

zeal for liberty and their ardent love for their country . . . supplied the answer. Out from their walled courtyards and harems marched three hundred of that weak sex, with the flush of undying determination in their cheeks. They were clad in their plain black robes with the white nets of their veils dropped over their faces. Many held pistols under their skirts or in the folds of their sleeves. Straight to the Medjlis they went, and, gathered there, demanded of the President that he admit them all. What the grave deputies of the Land of the Lion and the Sun may have thought at this strange visitation is not recorded. The President consented to receive a delegation of them. In his reception-hall they confronted him, and lest he and his colleagues should doubt their meaning, these cloistered Persian mothers, wives and daughters exhibited threateningly their revolvers, tore aside their veils, and confessed their decision to kill their own husbands and sons, and leave behind their own dead bodies, if the deputies wavered in their duty to uphold the liberty and dignity of the Persian

(people and nation.(١

This is not an isolated incident. Women in Muslim societies are and always have been active in social and political affairs, even if they have rarely taken publicly visible leadership roles. A careful reading of the Qur'an shows that this is no historical .accident

God directly addresses women through the revelation of the Qur'an by assuring them that their deeds will not

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W. Morgan Shuster, The Strangling of Persia (Washington, D.C.: Mage Publishers, -١ .١٩٨٧), ١٩٧-١٩٨

go unrewarded and by offering as exemplars women who have courageously taken positions in unfavorable social conditions, not however, to secure their own rights or .interests, but in obedience to God

Thus Mary, peace be with her, is rebuked by her people for having the child Jesus out of wedlock. She agreed to have the child when visited by the angel out of obedience to God. In response to the taunts directed against her, Mary offers no excuses but points to the child prophet, who miraculously speaks to them.(١) The wife of Pharaoh refuses to obey her husband and king in his idolatry because of her acceptance of the (message of the prophet Moses.(٢

The primary roles accorded to women in Islam are those of wife and mother, and it is precisely these roles with which feminists are most uncomfortable. Feminists are concerned with 'liberating' women from expectations that they should marry and .have children

They see progress for women in terms of employment opportunities, income, opportunities to experiment with non-traditional sexual relations and political power. Although Islam does not bar women from wealth and power, it places greater

.emphasis on marriage and the family

It seems that this accords with the interests of the vast majority of the women of the world. Although they are not averse to wealth and power, their primary concerns tend to center around marriage and the family. Islam dignifies these primary concerns .while feminism tends to undermine them

Of course, the most important role for

.(۱۹:۲۷-۳۰) -۱

.(۶۶:۱۱) -۲

woman in Islam is no different that that assigned to men-servant of God. It is as servants of God that Muslim women and men take on the roles of mothers and fathers and wives and husbands, buyers and sellers, teachers and pupils, workers .and employers, etc

Islamic Opposition To Socialism

Socialism calls for the destruction of tradition and its replacement by a radically .egalitarian system

The socialist distributive system is unIslamic because it ignores differentiation arising .as a result of contract and trade, but considers only the pattern of distribution

.Socialist materialism is incompatible with the ant materialism of Islamic ideology

The idea that the means of production must be in the hands of the masses, or the party that represents them, is contrary to the idea of hierarchical rule found in Islam, which, though it may be for the benefit of the people, does not give the people any .right to the means of production

More specifically, with regard to feminism, where socialism opposes the family as an expression of exploitative class relations, Islam seeks to support and encourage the

building and maintenance of families. Family ties are exceedingly important in Islam. .So Islam and socialism are diametrically opposed on this point

All forms of feminism with socialist leanings are in agreement with the aim of ultimate destruction of the family. All reject any sort of gender differentiation and .complementarity. As such, they are fundamentally opposed to Islam

Many of the forms of feminism that reject socialism, nevertheless retain the absolute ,egalitarian and anti-family principles of the socialists

p: ٢٩٢

.and so Islam will oppose them no less than it does more orthodox forms of socialism

Islamic Opposition To The Philosophical Attitude Of Feminism

The moral values espoused by feminists, whether equality feminism or gynocentric feminism, are not values supported by Islam. In feminism the goal is absolute freedom to choose to live as one pleases without interference of social customs or regulations assigning specified roles to men and women. Justice in Islam means everything being in its proper place, not absolute equality, let alone feminine .superiority in all areas

The determination of justice in Islam requires the wisdom and insight that result from study of and living according to the patterns set by the Prophet (s) and Imams (as) .

Philosophical thought in Islam, like all the aspects of Islamic culture, is a reflection of taw ld. All things are seen as having an underlying unity as effects of God as ultimate .cause, or as modes of His self-disclosure

Reason is championed as a vehicle for understanding taw ld. Feminist philosophical thought, on the other hand, moves in the opposite direction. Instead of searching for some underlying unity in being or causation or appearance and reality, feminism is occupied with the discovery of conflict; feminism sees hidden forms of subjugation lurking beneath virtually every text, every theory, every social or cultural

.phenomenon

It displaces the idea of a harmony between the masculine and feminine with outrage against the oppression of the female through gender differentiation. Reason itself is considered a tool of oppression, and reliance on reason is

'.disparagingly called 'logo-centrism

The ideal of the philosopher in Islamic culture is of one who has gained victory over the wiles of his base soul through the employment of the intellect. The intellect dominates over the soul of the philosopher, who thereby loses interest in what is .considered desirable by worldly standards

The ideal of the feminist thinker one finds in feminist writing is of a woman who is preoccupied with her own experiences and who uses those experiences to uncover the roots of women's oppression in gender differences which she overcomes through .an effort of desire unconstrained by patriarchy

The ideal of Islam is nearness to God, and social relations are governed by a spirit of obedience to God, in which justice is conceived as a proper balance that satisfies the .demands of moral conscience, social custom, and the explicit commands of God

In feminism, by contrast, all of theology is subordinated to its program of liberation, in which the ideal is a social freedom that makes its own absolute moral claims on behalf of equality and the abolition of gender based differences in social role, that demands .a revolution in social customs, and that rejects the explicit commands of God

Islamic Opposition To Feminist Political Theory

Islamic political theory sees injustice in terms of rebellion against God. It is because rulers usurp authority for the satisfaction of their own desires instead of submitting to the divine will that they perpetrate injustices on other people, their own subjects and ,their neighbors. The sin against God is primary

.and this is expressed in injustice to others

This political view is magnified in Shi'i theology. The dispute over the caliphate arises because some were unwilling to submit to the choice of God for leadership. All accept that 'Ali was designated for some sort of leadership role, but the supporters of other choices for caliph refused to accept this designation or its extension to the realm of .politics

With this refusal, for whatever reason, a spirit of something quite foreign to the complete submission required by Islam is displayed. The primary sin is that of disobedience to God. The injustices done in the violent attempts to hold power are the .natural consequence of this sin

Feminist political theory, on the other hand, sees the primary sin in the subjection of women to male authority. All other social injustice is interpreted on the basis of this, and the elimination of any subordination of women to men is seen as the key to the .elimination of all other forms of injustice

Islam aims at bringing the human ever nearer to the divine. Thus, the aim of the political order, in Islam, is the creation of an environment conducive to the worship of .and obedience to God through which proximity to Him is gained

This requires the establishment of a condition of social harmony and balance in which each component of society, its institutions, practices, cultural forms, discourse and individual members, each find their fitting place to approach divinity in complete .submission

The aim of the

political order in feminism, by contrast, never gets beyond freedom to violate the constraints of traditional gender roles, forming relationships and even communities

without any form of hierarchy, subordination, or gender differentiation such as is found in the families of virtually all cultures.

Islamic Opposition To Feminist Theology

Since there is no holy trinity in Islam, no God the Father nor God the Son, the concept of God in Islam is not as gender specific as it is in Christianity. In the Arabic of the Qur'an, masculine pronouns are used to refer to God, but this provides little leverage for the development of the sort of critique feminists have leveled against the Christian concept of God.

Goddess feminism, on the other hand, is clearly incompatible with the teachings of Islam. The God of Islam is not a woman, and He has no daughters.

Theological discussions of the attributes of God indicate very clearly, however, that there are feminine and masculine aspects of divinity and even that the feminine has priority.(۱)

Now, as Wolfson has argued in his study of Islamic theology,(۲) discussions of the names and attributes of God play a role in Islamic theology comparable to discussions of the Trinity among Christian theologians.

So, not only is the Islamic concept of the divinity free of the male bias present in the concept of the Trinity, but the closest thing we can find in Islam to the idea of relations internal to divinity discussed in Christianity in terms of the Trinity is the idea of the divine

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۱- See Sachiko Murata, The Tao of Islam (Albany: SUNY Press, ۱۹۹۲), especially part ۲.

۲- H. A. Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Kaldm(Cambridge: Harvard, ۱۹۷۶).

names and attributes in which not only is there an absence of bias against the feminine, but the feminine is dignified as paramount. God's mercy precedes His wrath.(۱)

Feminism has long been a favorite weapon in the arsenal of the colonialist powers. The colonialists used feminism in order to berate the cultures of the lands they governed, to win local support for Europeanization, and to provide moral justification (for imperialism.(٢

Europeans understood Islam very poorly prior to the twentieth century. The misunderstandings had been entrenched since the crusades when a disinformation campaign was employed to bolster the war effort. One of the aspects of this .campaign concerned gender in Islam

Islam was condemned because of polygamy, sensuality, and the imprisonment of women behind the veil. Even in the eighteenth century many Europeans believed that .Islam teaches that women have no souls

During the nineteenth century, the European colonialist powers, particularly the English, built upon these common misunderstandings to justify a program for the eradication of Muslim culture. Victorian anthropology contributed to the idea that the culmination of human evolution was to be found in England, and that it was therefore .natural and fitting for the British to rule over other peoples

At the same time, a vocal feminist movement was emerging in England itself. The colonialists made use of the arguments of English feminists in their own rhetoric to claim that because Muslims oppressed their women, their mores had to be replaced .by 'civilized' European mores

Colonial feminism was thus used

١- Murata (١٩٩٢), ٥٥, ٢٠٣-٢٢٢.

٢ - This is explained in detail by Leila Ahmed in Women and Gender in Islam (New Haven: Yale University Press, ١٩٩٢), ١٥٠ff. Most of what follows in this section is a .summary of information presented in Ahmed's work

against other cultures in the service of colonial rule, particularly against Muslim cultures, but in different variations it was also used against local cultures in India and .Africa

The colonialists argued that the fundamental reason for the comprehensive backwardness of Muslim societies was the prevalence of Islamic customs pertaining to women. The veil became the symbol for the degradation of women and chief target .of colonialist propaganda

In order for Muslim societies to progress toward civilization, the women in these .societies would have to learn to dress and behave like European women

Evelyn Baring, the ۱st Earl of Cromer, was the British consul-general of Egypt from ۱۸۸۲ to ۱۹۰۷, and he made frequent use of feminist arguments in his attacks against Islam, claiming that Islam degraded women while Christianity elevated them, yet in England Cromer were a founding member and a president of the Men's League for Opposing Women's Suffrage! Prominent in his statements about Egypt was that only by abandoning the veil could Egypt reap the benefits of the introduction of Western (civilization brought by the colonialists.(۱

Christian missionaries also focused on the role of women in Islamic societies to justify claims of the superiority of the Christian religion and the need for missionary activities .in Muslim lands under the protection, of course, of colonialist military prowess

In addition to colonialist rulers and missionaries, Western feminists also propagated the idea that Islamic precepts pertaining to women should be abandoned. Leila :Ahmed states

,Others besides officials and missionaries similarly promoted these ideas

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See Cromer's Modern Egypt, ۲ vols. (New York: Macmillan, ۱۹۰۸), cited in Ahmed - ۱ (۱۹۹۲), ۱۵۲-۱۵۳

individuals resident in Egypt, for example. Well-meaning European feminists, such as Eugenie Le Brun (who took the young Huda Sha'rawi under her wing), earnestly inducted young Muslim women into the European understanding of the meaning of the veil and the need to cast it off as the essential first step in the struggle for female liberation.(۱)

The legacy of colonialist feminism persisted through the neo-colonialist period to the present. Western feminists continue to criticize Muslim societies with special attention given to the veil, which is still seen by feminists as the symbol of the suppression of women by Islamic patriarchy.

Members of the upper classes in Muslim societies who adopted Western modes of dress, manners, home decor, and intellectual fashions also accepted colonialist feminism. The first feminists from the indigenous populations of colonialized countries were those of the upper classes who were educated in Europe or European schools.

Nationalist leaders in Muslim countries, such as Ataturk and Reza Shah, were the next to adopt the rhetoric of colonialist feminism as part of their programs of modernization. They were in basic agreement with to sort of values and worldview held by the colonialists.

They also agreed with the colonialists that their own cultures had to be reformed to come up to the standards of European civilization. Their only difference with the colonialists was that they wanted to direct the program of modernization themselves. They would not allow Europeans to govern their countries, but they themselves would govern their countries as the Europeans would, or

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۱- Ahmed (۱۹۹۲), ۱۵۴.

perhaps even more ruthlessly.

The values and fashions learned from the colonialists by the upper classes were to be

imposed on the society as a whole. The most striking symbol of this was the attempt .to outlaw traditional Islamic modes of dress

In ۱۹۳۶, Reza Shah declared the emancipation of women and made women's Islamic covering illegal. In ۱۹۶۳, women were granted the right to vote, and in the Family Protection Act, polygamy was made illegal and women were given custody of their .children in case of divorce

The Family Protection Act was revoked after the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, when this law and many of the other measures introduced by feminists were denounced along with the rest of the colonialist legacy as contrary to the aims of .Islam

The connection between feminism and cultural imperialism is clearly indicated by :Sachiko Murata

It seems to me that feminists who have criticized various aspects of Islam or Islamic society base their positions upon a worldview radically alien to the Islamic worldview. Their critique typically takes a moral stance. They ask for reform, whether explicitly or implicitly. The reform they have in view is of the standard modern Western type. Among other things, this means that there is an abstract ideal, thought up by us or by our leader, which has to be imposed by overthrowing the old order. This reform is of the same lineage as the Western imperialism that originally appeared in the East as .Christian missionary activity

p: ۳۰۰

The white man's burden gradually expanded its horizons-or reduced them, depending on how you look at it. Salvation was no longer touted as present in Christianity, but in (science and progress.(۱

Prof. Murata goes on to observe that the feminist critique takes a decidedly moral stance for granted, and on the assumption that any sort of subordination of women to men is wrong and oppressive, goes on to denounce Islam, as well as most other

.traditional systems that contain rules governing gender relationships

It is here that Muslims have to stop and ask whether the moral assumptions being used to condemn their religion are really acceptable. Islam has its own morals and jurisprudence grounded in a metaphysics that has been delineated through the .course of centuries by Muslim philosophers, Gnostics and theologians

The point is not that there can be no injustice in Islamic societies, but that Muslims will not be able to solve their social problems as Muslim by acquiescence to the social and .cultural hegemony of the West

Both feminine and masculine are double-edged swords. Each has a negative and a positive evaluation. If the rigidly "patriarchal" stress of some contemporary Muslims is to be softened, this can happen only when they place renewed stress on femininity .as a positive quality and masculinity as a negative quality

And Muslims will be able to do things as Muslims-not as imitation Westerners-only if they look once again at the spiritual and intellectual dimensions of their own (tradition.(۲

Conclusion:The Islamic Struggle Against Feminism

,The brief points made above

p: ۳۰۱

.Sachiko Murata, The Tao of Islam (Albany: SUNY Press, ۱۹۹۲), ۴ -۱

.Murata (۱۹۹۲), ۳۲۳ -۲

though sketchy, should be sufficient to show that the incompatibility of Islam with feminism is profound. It is not just a disagreement about how Islamic law is to be .interpreted or what sort of rights should be accorded to women

Islam and feminism have contradictory views on the most fundamental issues in .metaphysics, ethics, social and political philosophy and theology

Muslim women have also argued that feminism is an ideology relevant only to the lives of Western affluent women, and that even for them it has only resulted in making them into quasi men or sex objects. They have also pointed out that while Muslim women see their own most important roles to be mother and wife feminist ideology belittles the importance of these roles in its combat against gender .stereotypes

The most obvious marker of the struggle against feminism by Muslim women is Hijab (the canons of modesty in Islamic dress). While feminists have taken the scarf to be a symbol of their subjugation to men in Muslim societies, the faithful take it to be a .symbol of respect and modesty

The Prohibition By Islam Of The Oppression Of Women

No prohibition is given greater emphasis in Islam than that against injustice. In the Qur'an, particular attention is drawn to various areas in which there is a potential for injustice against women, but in general it is social acceptability and moral conscience .to which appeal is made in order to discern what is just from what is oppression

The laws of Islam set outer limits, but that does not mean

that whatever falls within the perimeters is condoned. With respect to worship, for example, the law specifies the outward conditions for correct prayer, fasting and ritual purity, but one may offer formally correct prayer in ways considered repugnant (makruh) even with respect to external form. It is rather trite to mention, additionally, .(that validity of external form is no guarantee of interior soundness (ihsan

According to a hadith related by both Shi'i and Sunni sources, on his last pilgrimage, the Prophet (s) said, "O people! Fear Allah regarding women, for you have taken them in trust from Allah." Since what is taken in trust must be properly cared for, some scholars have allowed that the legal religious authorities may intervene even when there has been no explicit violation of Islamic precepts in case of mistreatment of a (wife by her husband.(۱

Islam has been and continues to be misused as an instrument for the oppression of women. This happens in various ways. Sometimes men take advantage of the position of women in Muslim societies to deny women opportunities that should be protected were Islam properly practiced. The dictates of Islam against injustice to .women are simply ignored, and Islam itself is falsely used as an excuse for this

An example of this is the way the Taliban in Afghanistan misuse precepts of sexual segregation to deny women educational opportunities and access to health and other facilities. Another way women are oppressed in Islam is when the letter of the law is observed

p: ۳۰۳

Murtaza Mutahhari, The Rights of Women in Islam (Tehran: WOFIS, ۱۹۹۱), ۳۱۴, ۳۰۹- -۱ .۳۱۲

but its spirit is violated. Instances of this are too many to even begin giving examples. These are issues that need to be addressed by men and women in Muslim societies .today

Because of the abuses that exist, feminists argue that Islamic law should be changed, but there are other ways to fight abuse. More attention needs to be paid to the spirit of Islamic teaching. Islamic law should not be seen as a framework within which one .can get away with whatever one likes with impunity

Muslims need to be just as careful about the need to mold themselves according to the ideals taught by Islam as they are careful about conformity to its legal injunctions. The feminists seem to share the same blindness as those who use Islamic law as a pretext to oppress women, neither can see beyond the law to Islamic values and .ideals

The issue is addressed in some detail by Shahid Mutahhari who recognizes the :problem and describes it as follows

These cruelties are the outcome and an offshoot of a wrong conception of Islam, which, according to them, says: "A woman must bear such cruelties like a terminal cancer patient." This has created an impression of Islam that is more harmful than (any of the evil propaganda against our faith.(۱

Shahid Mutahhari calls for the organization of Islamic women's movements in order :to oppose the injustices done to women in Muslim society

In our country we are in need of a women's movement, but we need

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.Mutahhari (۱۹۹۱), ۳۰۶ -۱

(a pure Islamic movement and not a dark and gloomy European movement.(۱

Muslim Women's Movements

Struggles for the elimination of oppression to women based on an acceptance of Islam may be termed Islamic women's movements. In the modern period, Islamic women's movements arose as a reaction against feminism, although they concerned themselves primarily with the improvement of the conditions of women in Muslim .societies

It is not always clear whether organizations and individuals base their struggle for the improvement of the conditions of women on Islam or on a feminist ideology disguised .as acceptance of Islam. Nor is this a black and white distinction

It appears that a considerable number of Muslim women influenced by feminist ideas sincerely believe that the proper interpretation of Islam is one that calls for absolute equality (i.e., identity) of rights for men and women and the elimination of all .distinctions based on sex found in Islamic law as traditionally interpreted

On the other hand, other Muslim women may sincerely but incorrectly believe that there are no valid arguments within Islamic jurisprudence for reform of the traditional

interpretation of the law. So, among Muslim women's movements, as opposed to explicitly secularist feminist movements, we will find some to be firmly grounded on an attempt to be guided by God's final revelation as taught by His chosen Prophet, Muhammad (s), while others will attempt to manipulate the teachings of Islam for their own agendas, whether these are feminist or traditionalist agendas, and there will be much gray area between

p:۳۰۵

۱- Mutahhari (۱۹۹۱), ۶۶.

pure faith and hypocrisy, as there always is in matters of religion.

Feminists have taken note of the great popular support for Islam among women in Muslim countries. Some have responded by calling the Muslim women foolish or duped. This seems to be the attitude of Leila Ahmed. She claims that women are attracted to the moral ideals of Islam and are unaware that the legal ramifications of Islamic law put women at a disadvantage. This is an incredible hypothesis, to say the least.

It is hard to imagine a Muslim woman who has not heard that Islam has different rules of inheritance for sons and daughters, let alone one who is unaware of sex based differences in the marriage laws.

Some feminists have admitted that the Islamic movement has actually improved the status of women, regardless of whether improvement is judged by feminist or other standards. Haleh Afshar admits that the revival of Islam after the victory of the Islamic Revolution has been "almost literally a Godsend" in the context of which Iranian women have fought "against their political, legal and economic marginalization....Throughout, their arguments have been anchored in the teachings of Islam, the Koranic laws and the traditions and practices of the Prophet of Allah."(۱)

Afshar's attitude appears to be that if Islamic rhetoric can be used to win feminist objectives, this can justify compromises with Islam. Ziba Mir-Hosseini seems to agree:

I argue that, contrary to what the early literature contends, and what remains implicit in the later wave, the

p: ۳۰۶

Haleh Afshar, "Women and the Politics of Fundamentalism in Iran," in Haleh Afshar, -۱ .ed., Women and Politics in the Third World (London: Routledge, ۱۹۹۶), ۱۲۶

impact of the revolution on women has been emancipatory, in the sense that it has (paved the way for the emergence of a popular feminist consciousness.(۱

Mir-Hosseini, like Afshar, seems to think that it may be worthwhile making compromises with Islam in order to achieve feminist objectives. She refers to all women's movements as feminist, regardless of whether they are based on feminist ideology or Islam, although she offers the following conclusion about the indigenous :'feminism' she sees emerging in Iran

This process has inadvertently been nurturing an indigenous 'feminism' which is as much rooted in Iranian family structures as it is in the interaction of Islamic and Western ideals of womanhood. It could emerge only after challenging and rejecting the state-sponsored and Western-inspired 'feminism' of the Pahlavis, as well as the liberal-leftist feminism of ۱۹۷۰'s women's liberation, and yet in the process (assimilating some of the features of both.(۲

We can only pray that Muslim women's movements comprising both Muslim women and Muslim men will continue to be advance in their struggle against injustice and will continue to provide an alternative to feminism so that the family is strengthened .rather than undermined in loving obedience to the Most Merciful of the Merciful

Appreciation Of The Tao Of Islam

The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought by Sachiko Murata(۳) is a true masterpiece, not only of translation and exposition, but of Islamic propagation, as well. The work as a whole provides the best rejoinder yet given to the attack made on

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.Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Women and Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran," in Afshar (۱۹۹۶), ۱۴۳ -۱
.Ziba Mir-Hosseini (۱۹۹۶), ۱۶۳ -۲
.(Albany: State University of New York Press, ۱۹۹۲) -۳

.Islam from various feminist quarters both in the West and in the Muslim world

In brief, the answer is that the critics fail to see past the surface of Islam, a surface which is then judged by modern Western standards, while an adequate understanding of the feminine in Islam is impossible without an immersion in the ocean of Islamic spirituality, an ocean whose depths are expertly gauged with translations from no less than forty-eight Muslim sages, including narrations attributed to the Shi'i Imams, Peace be with them, philosophical pieces from authors such as Ibn Sinaand Mulla Sadra, poetry from Hafiz, 'Attar, and Rumi, and various 'irfani or sufi works including selections from Ibn 'Arabi and those of his school as well as selections from other writers such as Najm al-Din Kubra, Khwajah Abdallah Ansari .and 'Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani, to mention but a few

The translations range over a number of different topics including theology, cosmology and spiritual psychology, stitched together by the gender imagery used by the authors. The result is a demonstration that the gender concepts to be found in .Islamic thought stem from its fundamental orientation toward Reality

The feminist critique of Islam is exposed as simply the continuation of the negatively masculine proselytizing that has dominated Western attitudes toward Islam, and .toward non-Western cultures generally, at least since the colonial period

Instead of using Western models to frame her discussion, the author breaks new ground in comparative studies by explaining gender dualities in Islamic thought in terms of the

Taoist polarity between yin and yang. The Tao of Islam is truly a sourcebook of .Islamic thought that is destined to become a classic

At the same time, the work is also bound to be controversial and misunderstood. At issue is the treatment of women in Islamic law. By focusing on the symbolic dimension of gender, Murata is sure to be misunderstood by two factions: legalists who do not .care to see beyond the letter of the law, and those who are opposed to Islamic law

Members of both groups are sure to misinterpret Murata's thesis as the claim that the law can be jettisoned in favor of vague statements of symbolic value. The key to the misinterpretation is the idea that when it is claimed that a term has a certain symbolic .or metaphorical reading, nothing else can remain

If "woman" is read as a code for "the base soul", and if this reading is used to derive the statutes of Islamic law, the result will be either nonsense or the denial of the civil code of Islamic law altogether, for to claim that a man is to inherit twice the share of a woman cannot mean that the jurist is to allot the intellect with twice the inheritance of .the base soul

So, the jurists will complain the Murata has abandoned the law, and the opponents of Islamic law will celebrate the alleged abandonment. However, for the attentive eye, even a quick browse through the book will be

p:۳۰۹

enough to show that there is no attempt here to replace the law by a set of symbolic .relations

Murata repeatedly stresses the great respect for the sacred law of Islam, the shari'ah, which pervades the mainstream of the mystic tradition of Islam. Here we find a much-needed antidote to the lawless quietism propagated (especially in the West) in the name of sufism. The figurative is introduced not to replace the literal, but .to illuminate it

The traditional differences in gender roles that are canonized in Islamic law are not to

be justified by sexist claims of a natural inferiority of women to men, but by showing how these differences fit into a more comprehensive hierarchical understanding of reality. This is not to say that Islamic values have never been invoked, abused and misapplied to do injustice to women-they most certainly have; nor is this to say that women do not have rights similar to men according to Islam-they most certainly do, as it is stated in the Noble Qur'an itself, (۲:۲۲۸); and no one should deny the importance .of scholarly investigations into these areas

But Murata's work is not sociology of Islam, nor is it a work in Islamic law. It is not the place of this work to clear up the misunderstandings among Muslims as well as non-Muslims about Islamic law on the issue of women, rather the aim is to show how gender concepts which are politically very incorrect in the West today, function in the Islamic

p: ۳۱۰

spiritual tradition along lines in no way congruent with the politics of oppression, subjugation, and individual rights, which dominate so much of Western intellectual discussion of gender today. The book provides us with a different way of thinking .about gender altogether

The author, Sachiko Murata, wrote her M.A. thesis on the topic of temporary marriage and its social relevance at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Tehran, after having obtained a Ph.D. at that university in Persian literature. While studying in Iran, the author also translated a tenth/ Sixteenth century classic on 'usul al-fiqh (the .principles of jurisprudence) into Japanese

In addition to her studies of fiqh and 'usul, the author also studied the Islamic sapiential tradition with such notable authorities as Toshiko Izutsu and Seyyed Hossein Nasr,and has had the benefit of years of collaboration with her husband, the eminent scholar William C. Chittick. She is currently Professor of Religious Studies at .the State University of New York at Stony Brook

The book includes an Introduction, followed by four parts, the first of which

introduces the three central realities to be discussed in the succeeding parts: God, the cosmos, and the human being. There is also a postscript which addresses the feminist critique of Islam, two appendices giving a chronological list of and notes on the authors cited, a bibliography, an index of ayat of the Qur'an, an index of ahadith and .sayings, and a general index

The Introduction begins by pointing out the importance of cultural differences and the

way that presumptions rooted in Western culture may prevent the Western student from properly understanding the role of women in Islamic societies. In order to remedy such misunderstanding, it is necessary to become acquainted with the .intellectual tradition in Islam

Ignorance of or a dismissive attitude toward this tradition characterizes the feminist critique of Islam. The author then discusses her own preparations and motivations for writing this book, and explains the central comparison between the feminine and masculine principles of Taoism, yin and yang, respectively, and the gender symbolism .to be found in Islamic thought

It is explained that in Islam, everything is to be understood in terms of its relation with God, and the Islamic understanding of God Himself is to be found between the two poles of negative and positive theology, tanzih and tashbih, compared to the yang and .yin elements of Taoist thought, respectively

Likewise, the attributes of God, the so-called ninety-nine names of God, are often divided by Muslim authors into the attributes of majesty (jalal) and the attributes of beauty (jamal), which Murata refers to as the yang Names and the yin Names. Various symbols of the Qur'an, such as the Tablet and the Pen, may also be interpreted in .terms of feminine/masculine duality

Part one consists of a single chapter called "The Three Realities", in which the author shows that what she calls the Tao of Islam is made up of three great realities, God,

the cosmos, and the human being, and that in the sapiential

p: ۳۱۲

tradition of Islamic thought these realities are viewed as inseparable from each other. "Each can be seen as a replica of the Tao, with the two fundamental principles, yin and yang, harmoniously present."(۱) Both the macrocosm and the microcosm are .signs of Allah

Part Two, "Theology", consists of two chapters. In the first, "Divine Duality" it is initially made clear that in so speaking one must not in any way deny the absolute unity of Allah, tawid. Duality pertains to the nature of human discourse and thought .about the Divine

Likewise, in Chinese thought a distinction is made between the unnamable Tao and a Tao that can be named and spoken about and polarized into the principles of yin and yang. This is elaborated in terms of the difference between the Oneness of Being and the Manyness of Knowledge as discussed by Muslim authors, and the division of the .Divine attributes into those of majesty and beauty

Finally, the social implications of the Divine duality are explained: man's first duty is to obey God's law, the shari'ah, for it is only through awe of the attributes of majesty that the way to the attributes of beauty are to be found. In the third chapter, "The Two Hands of God", we find a more detailed discussion of the relationships among the .Divine attributes

The imagery of the right and left hands is explained with reference to theologians, mystics and interpreters of the Qur'an. God is not only said to have two hands, but

p: ۳۱۳

۱- Murata (۱۹۹۲), ۱۸.

to have two feet as well, and there is an extensive explanation of the significance of the symbolism involved here in the thought of Ibn 'Arabi, and others of this school of

.thought

Part Three, "Cosmology", has four chapters. In the first of these, "Heaven and Earth", there are discussions of the creation of the world, the relations of similarity and difference between heaven and earth, the seven heavens, and the four earthly .elements

In the next chapter, "Macrocosmic Marriage", the relation between heaven and earth is compared to that of husband and wife. Heaven is said to have married the earth because of her beauty and virtue, and Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine of a universal marriage which pervades all existence is explained, especially in terms of the Qur'anic symbols of the Pen and the Tablet; then the reflection of these elements as the First Intellect and the Universal Soul is introduced, illustrated by Sohravardi's discussion of the two .wings of the angel Gabriel

The human significance of all this is presented in the next chapter, "Human Marriage", which focuses on a few key ayat of the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet, may the Peace and Blessings of Allah be with him and with his progeny, and their interpretations by Ibn 'Arabi and others. The final chapter of this part, "The Womb", discusses the primordial feminine relationship of submission that all creatures bear .toward God, and God's infinite mercy

The womb is a symbol of the Divine mercy inherent in nature through

p: ۳۱۴

.which the individual is nurtured toward completeness and nearness to God

Part Four of the book, "Spiritual Psychology", consists of three chapters. In the first of these, "Static Hierarchy", the correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm is discussed, and how this correspondence evidences a deeper correspondence with the Divine Reality, in accordance with the ayah of the Qur'an: "We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and in themselves, until it is clear to (them that He is the Real." (۴۱:۵۳

Murata explains that this correspondence is especially important to a certain sort of esoteric interpretation of the Qur'an, ta'wil. The correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm allows a ta'wil to be formulated according to which ayat which appear to describe the cosmos are interpreted as pertaining to the human person, so that heaven and earth are taken as symbols for the spirit and soul, for example. From this exposition of the nature of ta'wil, a more detailed discussion of the intellect, the spirit and the soul is presented, according to a saying attributed to Imam Sadiq, which .is compared with the views expressed on this topic by Ghazali

In Chapter ۹,"Dynamics of the Soul", the jihad or struggle on the path to God is described. It is explained that the hierarchy presented in the previous chapter is not merely descriptive, but normative, and as such it marks stages on the way of spiritual progress. There follows an intriguing discussion of the relation between the descriptive and the normative

p: ۳۱۵

which goes far beyond the mere denial of the sort of absolute dichotomy to be found in Western ethics after Hume, for the discussion turns to the question of how .harmony between the descriptive and normative poles is to be achieved

The answer is to be found in a spiritual psychology that juxtaposes certain groups of qualities, in God, in the cosmos and in the human, attention to which allows people to come to recognize the forces within themselves in the context of the Divine prescriptions. This is followed by a discussion of the story of the fall of man and the .way of purification of the soul

In the final chapter of the book, "The Heart", we find a great wealth of material about matters of the heart drawn from the Islamic tradition pertaining to the spiritual hierarchy and dynamics discussed in the previous two chapters. For example,'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani uses the term heart to refer to that which makes a human being human. He interprets the Qur'anic verse, "We said, 'Adam, dwell with your wife in the .Garden," with the claim that the heart's wife is the soul

The sufi, Najm al-Din Razi, also compares the heart and soul to masculine and feminine elements, claiming that the heart and the soul are the children of the body and spirit. The soul is the daughter and is similar to its mother the body; the heart is the son and is similar to its father, the spirit. Razi goes on to

p: ٣١۶

claim that the soul has two inherent attributes that it inherits from its mother, the body, and that these are caprice and anger, and Murata explains that here too, caprice is itself the feminine or yin element and anger the masculine or yang element .of the soul

Just as the Taoists hold that in everything yin there must be a bit of yang, and vice versa, we find that the feminine soul must contain a masculine anger. The sought for harmony is to be achieved through the work of Islamic law, the shari'ah. The shari'ah requires the loyalty of the wife to her husband, that is, it orients the soul toward the heart: "The function of the Sharia is to turn all the forces of the soul in directions that will help the soul reach felicity."(١)

The final stages of the perfection of the heart are annihilation (fana') and subsistence (baqi), the former which takes place through the manifestation of God's left hand, the yang attributes of majesty, while the latter takes place through the manifestation of .God's right hand, they in attributes of beauty

The relation between the soul and the spirit is often described as one of conflict, with the soul pulling the individual away from the light of guidance (as in Taoism the yin is .portrayed as a dark force), while the spirit pulls the individual toward God

Through the submission of the soul to the spirit, harmony and balance are realized, which is compared to a marriage

p: ٣١٧

١- Murata (١٩٩٢), ٢٨۶.

between the First Intellect and the Universal Soul. The issue of this happy union is taken to be the human heart, a child in the image and likeness of God. In line with this view of the heart, the perfect man is frequently described as one who possesses a .heart

Mawlavi Jalal al-Din Rumi explains that the spirit is simply awareness, and that therefore, whoever has greater awareness has greater spirit. The human spirit is greater than the animal spirit because of its superior awareness. "Then the spirit of God's friends, the Possessors of Hearts, is even greater. . . . That is why the angels (prostrated themselves to Adam: His spirit was greater than their existence."(١

Commenting on the cosmic marriage of soul and spirit, Murata writes, "If the perfected rational soul is to be actualized, its parents-spirit and soul-must marry, give birth to it, and nurture it."(٢) In this passage Murata refers to the heart as the ."perfected rational soul

This term is noteworthy because in the modern Western view, rationality and the heart are seen as being at odds with one another. In Western literature, the heart symbolizes the emotional side of man and the head stands for the calculative rational .dimension

This dichotomy is completely alien to the Islamic spiritual tradition, in which the heart is identified with the rational, and rationality is understood as transcending the merely calculative. Instead of seeing the soul as containing two warring parts, reason and passion, with art and religion being

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١- Murata (١٩٩٢), ٣٠٥.

٢- Murata (١٩٩٢), ٣٠۶.

confined to the emotional, and reason left with nothing to do but juggle numbers, it might be salutary to submit to the more radical procedure of looking at the human

.being in a way suggested by the tradition of Islam

According to this tradition it is not the soul that contains the heart and intellect, but .rather the soul and reason in proper harmony give rise to the heart

Prof. Murata continues her presentation of the subject with a passage from one of the earliest writers to discuss the marriage of the soul and intellect and the birth of the (heart, Shihab al-Din Abi Haf 'Umar Suhrawardi.(۱

He describes the soul as the animal spirit in man. This soul and the spirit are attracted to one another like Adam and Eve, and love each other so much that each tastes death in absence from its mate. The product of the union of soul and intellect or spirit .is the heart-not the lump of flesh, but the subtle heart

Among the hearts of men, some are inclined toward the soul and some toward the spirit. At this point in his explanation, Suhrawardi cites a hadith attributed to the Prophet of Allah (s) according to which there are four kinds of hearts: the heart within which is a shining lamp of the person of faith, the black and inverted heart of the infidel, the hypocrite's heart which is bound by attachments, and the layered heart .within which are both faith and hypocrisy

Suhrawardi

This Suhrawardi (d. ۱۲۳۴), founder of the Suhrawardi sufi order and author of - ۱ 'Awdrif al-ma'drif, is not to be confused with the founder of Illuminationist philosophy, Shihab al-Din Ya۱ya Suhrawardi (d. ۱۱۹۱). I usually use the Persian transliteration, .'Sohravardi' for the latter

explains these types of heart in terms of their relation to their parents. To the extent that the heart inclines toward the intellect, it will gain felicity, and to the extent that it inclines toward the animal spirit, the earthly soul, the heart is wretched. It is noteworthy that Imam Khomeini comments on a similar ۱adith attributed to Imam

Baqir, and draws out its ethical implications in his

(Chehel hadith.(۱

The chapter concludes with several insightful remarks on what it means to be a true man and a true woman. A true man is someone whose intellect or spirit dominates .over his or her soul, whatever the person's physical gender

Thus, the term 'man' is used evaluative, and likewise, 'woman' is often used to refer to the base elements of the soul which commands to evil. It is in this sense that a woman may be called a man, as Mawlavi Jalal al-Din Rumi states that sometimes "a hero like ".Rustam is hidden in a woman's body, as in the case of Mary

Both men and women reach perfection through exemplification of the attributes of God; men exemplify the attributes of majesty more directly and the attributes of beauty secondarily, while with women it is generally the reverse. "Only when she is (fully herself by being fully one with God can she be fully human and fully female."(۲

For the Western reader, this book presents a real challenge and an opportunity to question the prevailing values of liberal culture. For the Muslim, the

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۱- This is discussed in the next chapter, "The Nurture of the Heart."

۲- Murata (۱۹۹۲), ۳۱۸.

book also presents a challenge, for it allows us to become reacquainted with an aspect of Islamic culture from which many have become alienated, for Western .cultural values are often unconsciously assimilated

At the same time, the work offers a sound basis from which to defend the penetrating insights which are a hallmark of the Islamic intellectual tradition of which Murata .writes, a tradition to which Muslim intellectuals today would do well to aspire

The Nurture Of The Heart

When modern Western science turned its attention to the human mind and established the human science of psychology, it did so in the shadow of earlier gains made in the empirical sciences, with the result that the fathers of modern psychology focused their attention on those aspects of mind which could be best studied in a manner modeled on that of the physical sciences.

Freud, himself trained as a physician, saw psychology as an extension of medicine. Inappropriate behavior was attributed to mental illnesses analogous to the physical maladies that inhibit the proper function of the organs. In many university texts used today, psychology is defined as the science of human behavior, although there is a growing awareness, especially among therapists, that the attempt to model psychology on the physical sciences results in a woefully superficial understanding of the person.

We are finally beginning to hear voices of protest from among those professionally trained in psychology against the secularist presuppositions which dominate the field. Although this protest has its roots in the school of

p: ۳۲۱

thought initiated by Carl Jung, it has developed into what has been called 'soul-oriented psychology' by James Hillman, and has recently found eloquent expression in Thomas Moore's Care of the Soul.(۱)

Moore proposes that the flaw of the dominant approaches to psychology is their failure to appreciate the importance of religion and the need to make spirituality a serious part of everyday life. He draws upon his own Catholic Christian tradition in order to articulate an understanding of the human soul and how it is to be cared for.

Much of what Moore says about the inadequacies of secularism will strike a resonant chord with Muslims, whose doctrine of tawhid, or Divine unity, fosters attempts to understand all aspects of life in terms of their relation to the One.

Many of the topics discussed by Moore, from jealousy and envy to the sacred arts, are

also the subjects of attention in the spiritual tradition of Islam, where in addition to discussions of the progress of the soul, one also finds special attention given to the .nurture of the heart

After concurring with Moore's criticisms of modern psychology, we may find ourselves better able to appreciate the wisdom expressed in the Islamic tradition pertaining to the heart. From this perspective, care of the soul may be seen as a preliminary to .purification of the heart

:In the Introduction to Care of the Soul, Moore writes

In the modern world we separate religion and psychology, spiritual practice and therapy. There is considerable interest in

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.(Thomas Moore, Care of the Soul (New York: Harper Collins, ۱۹۹۴ -۱

healing the split, but if it is going to be bridged, our very idea of what we are doing in our psychology has to be radically re-imagined. Psychology and spirituality need to be seen as one. In my view, this new paradigm suggests the end of psychology as we have known it altogether because it is essentially modern, secular, and ego-(centered.(۱

Precisely the same point could be made with regard to other modern secular fields, such as politics, art, literature and philosophy. They have come to presuppose the .fundamental tenets of individualistic secular modernism

The greatest political protest that has ever been made against modernism and in favor of traditional cultural values is the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Muslims all over the world are now beginning to gain the confidence to develop their own traditions, .not only in politics, but in the arts and sciences, as well

On the other hand, although the Islamic Revolution may be considered anti-modernist, in the sense that it represents a rejection of cultural values seen as being

imposed by the West, many commentators have been shocked at how much of modernism has been accepted by revolutionary Muslims. Muslims generally pursue technology, development, economic expertise and the social sciences, including psychology, without much thought to the ways in which these may be linked to more .offensive manifestations of Western culture in Muslim societies

Those who continue to imagine that the way to progress and development is through the blind imitation and importation of Western ideas and

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.Moore (١٩٩۴), p. xv -١

methods would do well to ponder the fact that within the Western world itself, an increasing number of thinkers are turning to tradition as a source of inspiration. This does not mean that we are to simply replace imitation of the West by imitation of tradition. The necessity for critical thought is undeniable; what is at question is its .orientation

One of the greatest sources of traditional thought which has stimulated religious thinkers in the East and West is the works of Plato, and Moore draws upon Plato's idea of the "craft of life" in working out his own understanding of care of the soul. He :writes

Another phrase Plato used was heautou epimeleisthai, "care of oneself"; this word for care also described honoring the gods and the dead. Somehow we have to understand that we cannot solve our "emotional" problems until we grasp this mystery that honoring the divine and the departed is part of the basic care that as (human beings we have to bring to life.(١

Another insight Moore draws from the ancient Greeks is the need for community. Plato discusses his ideal city, the Republic, as an organic community whose sectors .are analogous to the parts of a single human soul

The emphasis on community is also voiced by one of the most important movements in current political philosophy critical of liberalism: communitarianism. Moore recognizes that one of the strongest needs of the soul is for community, and that in the modern world there are many signs that

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Moore (۱۹۹۴), xvii -۱

(we lack a sufficiently deep experience of community.(۱

Sometimes the need for community and its lack in modern society are manifested in deep feelings of loneliness, even to the point of causing thoughts of suicide, which the .therapist discovers in his practice

Moore remarks that professional psychology has created a catalogue of disorders, known as the DSM-III, and that he would like to add to the list some of the disorders :he has seen in his practice. He writes

For example, I would want to include the diagnosis "psychological modernism," an uncritical acceptance of the values of the modern world. It includes blind faith in technology, inordinate attachment to material gadgets and conveniences, uncritical acceptance of the march of scientific progress, devotion to the electronic media, and (a lifestyle dictated by advertising.(۲

Moore suggests that the way out of the kinds of neuroses faced by modern Western people is to learn from other cultures, from art and religion and philosophy. He continues that modern psychology can be replaced by care of the soul, and that then ("we can begin building a culture that is sensitive to matters of the heart."(۳

Among Muslim traditions there is a great wealth of fascinating discussions of matters of the heart, some of which has been collected in Murata's The Tao of Islam. In general, the Muslim sages, like the sages of other traditional societies, would .diagnose the illness of "psychological modernism" as due to a lack of inner harmony

The particularly Islamic recipe requires the observance of

۱- Moore (۱۹۹۴), ۹۲.

۲- Moore (۱۹۹۴), ۲۰۶.

۳- Moore (۱۹۹۴), ۲۸۴

the shari'ah. The shari'ah orients the soul toward the heart: "The function of the Sharia is to turn all the forces of the soul in directions that will help the soul reach felicity."(۱)

Should we conclude that all that is needed to cure psychological modernism is to establish an Islamic government that enforces the shari'ah? Obviously this will not be sufficient, and if the enforcement is carried out in an odious manner, the net result will probably be a worsening of the disease rather than its cure. Islamic law can perform its curative function only when it is observed willingly, because it works by getting us to want and will what is appropriate.

Abd al-Razzaq Kashani, commenting on the Qur'an, explains that God sends down' with the Qur'an the differentiations of the discerning intellect, and that this differentiation "will then be a healing for the illnesses of the hearts".(۲)

The illnesses to be healed are things like ignorance, doubt, hypocrisy, blindness of heart, rancor and envy. The analytic distinctions set out by Islamic law between the pure (tahir) and impure (najis), the correct (sahih) and incorrect (batil), and the fivefold classification of acts into those which are obligatory (wajib), recommended (mustahab), neutral (mubah), disapproved (makruh) and prohibited (haram), all are needed for the proper harmonious synthesis of the elements of the soul, which in turn is required for the health of the heart.

The point is expressed by Mawlavi Jalal al-Din Rimi as follows:

Sick, surely, and ill-savored is the heart

.Murata (۱۹۹۲), ۲۸۶ -۱

.Murata (۱۹۹۲), ۳۰۲ -۲

that knows not

.Cannot distinguish) the taste of this and that)

When the heart becomes whole (is healed) of pain and

,disease

.it will recognize the flavor of falsehood and truth

{When Adam's greed for the wheat [the forbidden fruit

(waxed great, it robbed Adam's heart of health.(۱

Perhaps some will object that this sufi purification of the heart of worldly desires may be salutary for a heart afflicted by the traditional vices, but can such a prescription cure the heart diseased by such modern illnesses as psychological modernism, alienation, drug addiction, loneliness, violence and boredom? The facile answer is that .if you get rid of all the traditional vices, the modern ones will also evaporate

This, however, is to ignore the fact that the modern situation may be such as to make .the pursuit of virtue and eradication of vice seem quaint and rather beside the point

Modern theories, most of them with roots in nineteenth century Europe, offer their own solutions to the modern maladies they describe. Marxists, for example, used to think that state ownership of industry and capital would bring about liberation from .the modern maladies. No one seems to believe that any more

Liberalism does not really address itself to the modern maladies, but would seem to imply that they are private matters, to be treated by one's psychotherapist or pastor. The psychotherapist will suggest that a cure is to be found in facing one's feelings of

guilt, seeking satisfying sexual relations, and many more sessions with the psychotherapist. Perhaps psychotherapy deserves

p: ۳۲۷

۱- Mathnavi, II, ۲۷۳۷ ff. translated in W. C. Chittick, The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi, p. ۵۶, also see W. C. Chittick, The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi, (Albany: SUNY Press, ۱۹۸۳).

more than this sort of snide put-down, if for no other reason than that it has attracted so many believers.

But the point here is that it treats the modern diseases of heart, soul and spirit as if they were private matters pertaining to one's childhood relations with parents and adult enjoyment of sex. Moore is certainly to be commended for seeking to move past this with his rejection of modern psychology. Most psychotherapists today seem to rely more on pharmaceuticals than the theories of Freud or Jung, anyway. Drugs are a way to cope with mental disorders, but no one pretends that they offer a cure.

People today are unhappy. Where there is wealth, there is wanton consumption, and where there is not, there is envy. Both are primarily stimulated by television. The religious solution offered in the context of liberal capitalism is the consumption of mass marketed spirituality.

It does not really matter very much if it is mainstream Christianity, New Age, or even sufism! What is offered is a private religion of religious experience. Having the right sorts of experiences is supposed to cure the troubles of the modern mind. Religion offers consolation. It soothes. God loves you. You are saved, if you just believe with all your heart. The wanton consumption continues and the envy. The TV is still on.

Charles Taylor speaks of three major sources of the moral outlook of modern Western people: theism, naturalism, and Romanticism and its successors. He finds these sources have evolved

in such a way that they are not capable of solving the problems of the loss of meaning and disenchantment.

What is needed, Taylor concludes, is insight into the importance of human sympathy and commitment, of the inherent value in things and our ability to recognize such values. While Taylor expresses doubts about the ability of Christianity, or more generally of theism, to foster the needed insights, he admits to sharing the hopes "implicit in Judeo-Christian theism."(۱)

If the complex of psychological modernism is so deep, should we really expect that Islam will do any better at solving it than the modern approaches have? The science of the West would seem to place no hope in anything remotely like Islam, after all, it contends, it was developed to deal with an entirely different set of problems.

Second, Islam does not seem to offer anything all that much different from Christianity; so, if Christianity has failed modern man, the prospects for Islam will be dim as well. Third, if the roots of the modern disorders of the mind lie in the social configuration of societies in relation to industrialization and the sorts of life style changes that accompany the development of industry, adaptation of technology and media, religious affiliation would not seem very important.

In Marxist terminology, this would be to expect a change in the mode of production because of an alteration of the superstructure. For example, it could be argued that in America and Europe marriage is weakening not

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۱- Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, ۱۹۸۹), ۵۲۱.

because so many people believe in a socialist or feminist utopia without the constraints of marriage, but because men and women repeatedly find themselves

failing at marriage. It doesn't matter whether they are Muslims, Christians or .Buddhists

They fail at marriage because of complex factors including the legal system, media exploitation of sex for marketing purposes, availability of sexual relations outside of .marriage, lack of support for marriage through extended familial relations, etc

Fourth, the objector will ask us to look at the mess the societies of the 'Islamic' nations, for example, the widespread corruption and political repression that characterize most Muslim societies, the ostentatious consumption of the rich alongside abject poverty, and the envy of the middle classes for those who have more .of the luxuries imported from the West

So, how can Islam help? First of all, it should be admitted that acceptance of Islam by an individual or society is not sufficient for salvation from psychological modernism. Nevertheless, there is reason to have hope in Islam if for no other reason than that it is not rooted in the modern ideas that have abetted the emergence of the modern .maladies

Of course, the same could be said for Christianity, but Christian thought has itself undergone its own process of modernization in a manner that makes it difficult to work effectively against the flaws in modernism. Reliance on Islam offers us another chance. Maybe it is our last chance. Maybe Islam is the last chance for humanity to throw

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off its prejudices and conceits, to find social harmony and inward spiritual harmony in .humility before God

It is true that Islam appeared in and addressed a society very different from those of the world today, but there is a seductive whiff of hope that in the process of finding the universal message of Islam and applying that message to current situations at the very least we can avoid the pitfalls into which various tendencies of Christian thought

.have fallen

Religious affiliation is not so important, but the practical application of religious ideas in society can engender positive changes. For example, if Muslim societies thrive, their media will not exploit sex for marketing, the legal system will not encourage the breakdown of the family, extended family relations will support the marriages of their members who will find the inner moral strength in their faith to maintain loyalty to .spouses

The tremendous problems of Muslim societies today are no cause to despair over the ability of Islam to cope with modernism, because the hope we seek from Islam requires the implementation of divine guidance, not merely formal allegiance and enforcement of external precepts. The world today needs a force that can stand in opposition to the dominion of world consumerism and the values of market capitalism. .Only Islam seems capable of playing this role

Of course, the opposition role is not sufficient. If the Islamic movement is to be effective, it must offer more than a rejection of the evils of modernized

culture; it must promise something more rewarding, and it must be able to present this promise in the form of a vision of how humanity in its current conditions of .distress can move toward the path of divine guidance

Certainly, in the intellectual traditions of the Muslims, especially those pertaining to the inner life, 'irfan, there are sources enough on which to draw for such vision, if they are interpreted with an astute cognizance of current conditions and their historical .contexts

The final stages of the perfection of the heart are annihilation (fana') and subsistence (baqi), destruction followed by a new life. The malaise and avarice psychological .modernism would also seem to require destruction and new life

Through participation in the renewal of Islamic community Muslims may find a way to

disillusionment with the glitter of the modern, and devote themselves to the realization of the human perfection for which God has created us. In line with this view of the heart, the perfect man is frequently described as one who possesses a heart, as Mawlavi Jalal al-Din Rumi writes:

The owner of a heart becomes a six-faced mirror;

through him God looks upon all the six directions.(۱)

In another place Mawlavi explains that the spirit is simply awareness, and that therefore, whoever has greater awareness has greater spirit. The human spirit is greater than the animal spirit because of its superior awareness. "Then the spirit of God's friends, the Possessors of Hearts, is even greater.. That is why the angels

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۱- Mathnavi, v, ۸۷۴. See Chittick, The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi, p. ۶۱

prostrated themselves to Adam: His spirit was greater than their existence."(۱)

Commenting on the cosmic marriage of soul and spirit, Murata writes, "If the perfected rational soul is to be actualized, its parents-spirit and soul-must marry, give birth to it, and nurture it."(۲) If the heart may properly be understood as the 'perfected rational soul' perhaps the cure for some of the maladies of which Thomas Moore speaks will turn out to require more than care of the soul, but a way of looking at the soul which is entirely different from what is typically found in the Western tradition.

Instead of seeing the soul as containing two warring parts, reason and passion, with art and religion being confined to the emotional, and reason left with nothing to do but logic chopping and juggling numbers, it might be salutary to submit to the more radical procedure of looking at the human being in a way suggested by the tradition of Islam. According to this tradition it is not the soul that contains the heart and intellect, but rather the soul and reason in proper harmony give rise to the heart.

In a passage from one of the earliest writers to discuss the marriage of the soul and

intellect and the birth of the heart, Shihab al-Din 'Umar Suhrawardi(۳) describes the .soul as the animal spirit in man

This soul and the spirit are attracted to one another like Adam and Eve, and love each other so much that each tastes death in

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۱- See Murata (۱۹۹۲), ۳۰۵, who cites Mathnavi II, ۳۳۲۶-۳۰, and Chittick's The Sufi Path of Love, pp. ۳۱-۳۲, ۳۷, ۳۹-۴۰, ۶۲, etc.

۲- Murata (۱۹۹۲) ۳۰۵.

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absence from its mate. The product of the union of soul and intellect or spirit is the .heart-not the lump of flesh, but the subtle heart

Among the hearts of men, some are inclined toward the soul and some toward the spirit. At this point in his explanation, Suhrawardi cites a hadith attributed to the Prophet of Allah (s) according to which there are four kinds of hearts: the heart within which is a shining lamp of the person of faith, the black and inverted heart of the infidel, the hypocrite's heart which is bound by attachments, and the layered heart .within which are both faith and hypocrisy

Suhrawardi explains these types of heart in terms of their relation to their parents. To the extent that the heart inclines toward the intellect, it will gain felicity, and to the .extent that it inclines toward the animal spirit, the earthly soul, the heart is wretched

An interpretation of a similar hadith which explicitly brings out its moral significance is given by Imam Khomeini (quddisa sirruh).(۱) The hadith on which Imam Khomeini comments is attributed to Imam Baqir , who is reported to have said that there are four kinds of hearts: "the heart that has faith and hypocrisy in it, the heart that is inverted and upside down, the heart that has been sealed and is darkened, and the ".heart that is clear and luminous

Imam Khomeini warns that the theoretical discussion of the states of the heart and that which relates

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See Forty Hadith: An Exposition, Part ۳۴, by Imam Ruhullah al-Musawi al-Khomeini, -۱ .tr. by A. Q. Qara'i, Al-Tawhid, vol. XII, No. ۱, ۱۳-۲۴

to its health and sickness, reform and corruption, must be recognized as being a mere .preliminary to the practical work of genuine reform

The believer's heart is described as luminous because faith is a human perfection, being a kind of knowledge, and perfections are completions of existence, which is spoken of as light. Imam also explains that the faithful, since they are followers of the Perfect Man and walk in his footsteps, they journey by the light of his guidance and .the lamp of his knowledge

The term "Perfect Man" is said to have been introduced by Ibn 'Arabi, and is used for one of the most important concepts of 'irfan (gnosis). Within the tradition in which Imam Khomeini writes, the term 'perfect man' is used for the prophets, and the special friends of God, the 'awliya, among whom the most prominent are the twelve .imams of the Shi'ah

Imam explains that the inversion of the heart results from neglect of God and attention to worldly things; this conforms with the view of the writers mentioned by Murata, who speak of the wretched heart as one that attends to the desires of the soul and neglects the light it receives from its father, the spirit or intellect. Here too, .we see that the proper function of the intellect is to come to know God

One might object that attention to intellectual knowledge cannot cure the sick heart, even if the knowledge is about theology. The objection betrays an incorrect understanding

of the knowledge of God sought by the 'drif. What is sought is no propositional judgment, no statement of dogma nor philosophical proof, but the unveiling or tasting .of divinity, called the 'encounter with God', liqd Allah

This is not mere intellectual knowledge in the modern sense, but a knowledge with affective and practical dimensions. The heart may only be cured when it is not cut off .from the intellect; so, the intellect must be able to speak to the heart

Imam Khomeini concludes with a call to faith and to a harmony of the exotic and esoteric, urging his readers to take care that the effects of faith may be established in .both our inner and outer being

In the same way as we claim to possess faith in the heart, we should make our outward being also subject to its authority, so that the roots of faith become established in our hearts . . . so that this Divine trust of a celestial and pure heart, fashioned with its Divine nature, is returned to the Sacred Being unaffected and (unsoiled by the workings of Satan and the hands of treachery.(۱

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.Ibid., ۲۳-۲۴ -۱

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ۹

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ۲۰۰۷, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the cyberspace.

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-

replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

providing services for seminary and university researchers-

spreading culture study in the publich-

paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

merely presenting scientific contents-

mentioning the sources-

.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute

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Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism- places

.Producing animations, computer games and etc-

Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com-

Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-

Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-

Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems,- web kiosks

Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

Holding virtual teacher-training courses-

Producing thousands of research software in three languages (Persian, Arabic and- English) which can be performed in computers, tablets and cellphones and available and downloadable with eight international formats: JAVA, ANDROID, EPUB, CHM, PDF, HTML, CHM, GHB on the website

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:Appreciation

We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

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